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## DEDICATION:

just once to say "i love you" all the feeling felt  
to dwell inside the words as they are spoken  
(not broken on the tongue by my intent  
conscious or otherwise  
to hold back in speech each feeling  
behind the syntax of my own attention  
naming song what never sings  
but is a circling in my tension round you)  
that desire to "say" totally  
in gesture as in word  
all that i do feel for you  
locked up in hesitations i give you as poems

bp Nichol ("love song 2", from *zygal*)

This issue is dedicated to the memory of bp Nichol (1944-1988). Barrie Nichol, poet, teacher, healer, and editor, publisher, performer, theoretician, and literary omnivore, promoter of new writers and new ideas, willing supporter of all those who sought his help, audacious eye-winking teller of bad jokes, and courageous fellow traveler, has, through his boundless compassion, wisdom and patience, and veracity and wit, forever opened our eyes to new horizons, inspired our minds with new visions, and blessed our hearts with his joy and love.



# H



# THE CAPE HORNERS' BALL

By Michel Serres

Translated from the French

By Genevieve James

Toward the end of his life the man felt apprehensive at the change of even a few millimeters of mercury. At the turn of this century a cumbersome hurricane had left him with almost no leeway in the sea waters of the Kerguelen Archipelago, putting his ship, sails and oars, at three degrees from the seven hundred mark, on the barometer. Who ever remembered that? When you are thirty or forty feet deep in a wave trough you no longer think of measuring. The landscape is so different. You only see the surge: a wall diverting terrifying winds from your sails at a devastating height. You get a quick uppermost view of an infernal litter of scum. My life has two eras: a time which predates a similar moment — it lasted five days — and a time which follows. You come out of it differently, changed, I do not say for the better.

Since that time he had read in the newspaper the report of a bad hurricane recounting one or two millimeters less, was that possible? He wanted to find out whether it was history or gossip. He wished to know how you go through it when the situation is worse. With the grace of God, no doubt. But whom to ask, how to get to the bottom of it? Soon, a similar instance would wait for him. It is in store for every one of us. It happened to him. May God protect me.

A shy little old man — he died last year — he lived in an old house in Le Mouleau among pine trees, three hundred yards from the sea. I never saw him go aboard a boat, even inside the natural harbor. He was like a cat fearful of water. His children sailed pleasure boats and loved navigation. They had the appropriate vocabulary and clothing. You see them in the harbor by the hundred nowadays, never leaving it, holding a small anchor in their hand. They look like sailors even more so than the real ones, these jokers, I must say they impress me. I only sailed large, over five hundred tons big tugs. I am afraid of these ping-pong balls. I am not kidding. I did experience grand pleasure boats, though. Greetings to you my friend de Roos who forced open, better than me, the true Northwest Passage. Anyway, at his age he still climbed pine trees when a dead limb was threatening his roof or his grandchildren.

A slight wind made the mast a little shaky, in those days the boat would roll so much that the yardarms alternately dipped to the sea from port to starboard. How could he cling up there, his hands lowering the sails, a miracle? One arm for the ship owner, one arm for his life, that was the adage. What was he dreaming of, at the age of eighty atop these trees, hung like an insect atop the mast, seeing the vertiginous forest laid out to the dunes? Was he sleeping suspended in the set of the wind? Was he still on the lookout?

Stone deaf, silent, he rarely left his room. Doesn't a dignified skipper also stay in his cabin? A scaled reproduction of his first schooner was displayed on the mantelpiece. Near it was the funeral urn of his daughter who died in Shanghai during the sino-japanese war. In that upheaval, bodies could not be transported. He read a little, chemistry or physics manuals, little or no literature. He wasn't an imaginative man. When he died, they put in his coffin the urn of his daughter's ashes. Next year, the mingling.

I had the impression I knew him. I stayed with him for a long time. I waited for him to speak. You simply had to tame him. I memorized the old seaman's handbook, knots, signals, the Makaroff fender, the Hydrographic Service No. 1, and other trifles. I had identified the Leie's buoy two hundred times. I wasn't quite unworthy of his silent companionship. His life had been ruptured. His time interrupted like in a dream, a fairy tale as in *Sleeping Beauty*. He ended up in France after the war, more than ten years of absence had separated him from his family. His children had almost become strangers. He left a pregnant wife on a wharf in Shanghai, when he returned his younger son was nearly a teenager. On one side, famine; on the other, the Japanese. He was a strange host in his own household. An almighty master and an invited guest. I saw the continuation of *The Odyssey*. One wonders whether Ulysses was ever happy, or whether Penelope or Telemachus were seized with xenophobia. A sailor always brings back the scent of Circe, Scylla and the Sirens: he can't help it. He comes from elsewhere. He is elsewhere. He is an absentee. Fifteen years after the festivities of his return, the rift had remained. He still stayed in his room, didn't take his eyes off the urn he brought back: it was his sole family. Frightened by so many changes that had occurred, he failed to solder the times of his life. Perhaps he agreed to talk, to speak to me because I helped with the soldering. For him I belonged to the post-war generation, however I knew how to moor a ship with two anchors at the bow. I had experienced the Guardafui Cape. We would indefinitely speak of sailing a ship.

Without pomposity he would recount "Frisco's earthquake", the three hundred tons of cement carried from Liverpool six months around the Cape Horn, doldrums included. The whole load was towed with a whaleboat when strong winds were lacking. Why did he escape so young from his little village of the Gers? Never is the sea so fascinating like a glaucous eye, when it is flat and transparent. The sailing ship is set in a viscosity congealing with large patches. The oars seem not to pull through the compactness. Water is alive only when fringed, broken, painful. Frisco? Very little recollection. The Gold Rush craze? No memories. It's true, a seaman only remembers the sea.

He spoke of Tasmania, the Southern Forties and the Cape of Good Hope, the forgotten seaways from before the steamboats. Nowadays who goes through there? The wind. The wind alone whirls around the ring of those free waters under the capes. A few young men go there running after fame. They pick up plastic bottles, they say. Steam, steel, paddle wheels and propellers came afterward. He spoke of Darjeeling he had seen built on the border of the Himalayas. He rushed there during a forced stop-over caused by damage to his ship, as it often happened then. Five months for repairs. The only available propeller was in Osaka. One took the time. Alone, always alone since he had left Cazaubon. Alone since his feet had touched a moving deck. He would tell about pirates from Malaysia, tariffs paid when required, corruption and long pow wow. He asked: but why so few Frenchmen anywhere around the world? I answered: you know very well, to emigrate is a punishment. He added: I know. Tell me, the Kerguelen are not as high as the Cape Horn, are they? No sir, not as high. Then believe it or not I passed through the Cape in beautiful weather, no wind, calm water, magnificent view, a cruise. The next time it was hell. The noise was so loud you didn't hear anything, a second silence it was. Do you understand that? A maddening stillness beyond the uproar? I understand. I had heard it, one day.

One summer evening he scared me because of the near disappearance of history. You just arrived from Baltimore? he asked me. I often go there for my work. Sometimes one leaves one's country to protect oneself a little against local hatred. He closed his eyes. The sun was bleeding in the pine trees. Tell me, isn't Baltimore at the far end of a long intricate bay? Indeed, I said, and a very beautiful one, I assure you. I don't know it, but are the wharfs still made of wood? Are you kidding, Sir? He slowly imparted his wife's parentage. Her grandfather, a merchant from Bordeaux had embarked on a sailing ship from Saint Malo going to America, just to sell wines to these people. His letters proved that he had become bored. Passionately fond of music, he longed for the concert season in Bordeaux. He returned and recounted Baltimore to his grand-daughter, who confirmed its description in fine details. It was a staggering thing. In the midst of an evening of August 1976, I listened to the report of Chateaubriand's journey: same ship, same port of departure, same voyage and same Baltimore. A report told by a single intermediary who personally had it hearsay. Neither my old Capehorner nor his wife were capable of deceit. Literature was foreign to them. The posthumous was speaking. Two centuries collapsed in front of us, such a brief and brisk interval. I know, soon I will die. I hardly have time to love, to breathe. Hardly. But I believed in history, under my feet, long-standing, stable, strong. It likewise slips away, bleeds, cracks. I nearly saw Chateaubriand's René at my side: his expectations, his vessel, his race up the main-yard under the applause of the crew, the beautiful young black woman and that same light anxiety of living. The foolish French failure in America.

He had sailed even through the seaports of the Levant, from Marseilles to the Black Sea, through the Hellespont and Greece. Not only did he know the wide world, he had also navigated the Mediterranean Sea. We both liked especially the Oriental. It almost looks too much like its painted reproductions. One would think it took its colors, its squalor, its transparency from them. Our Sea has three sectional boxes. Like a strong-box it has three secrets. From Gibraltar to the stiff barrier framed by Italy, Sicily and Tunisia, we have our everyday common mother. The Sea is old, like us, it is a slave of the barbarians from the North, it gave us birth naturally. Past Pantelleria, it is our grandmother. There, sea-boxes can be found already divine, deified. Who wouldn't tremble off Kusadasi, between Ephesus and Miletus in front of the givers of geometry and physics; between Samos and Patmos in front of the givers of arithmetic and the apocalypse or the gospel of love. What would we be without this little circle barely twenty miles wide, where Saint Paul deposited some letters? I sailed through that area, now and then, humble and grateful amidst the stupid indifference of my fellow shipmates. Beyond Crete and Carpathos which close the Greek sea-box, one encounters our great-grandmother, our unconsciousness. Things remain buried deep in our body like our great oblivions from Palestine and the Nile.

At Port-Said, in a radiant afternoon, a sort of fakir came nimbly on board without anyone noticing. He was naked except for a short loin-cloth. He was freeing doves and handkerchiefs from his nakedness. The sailors couldn't make head or tail of him. At last I understood the questions of appearance, the often mentioned delusive senses that exist only marginally under our latitudes. My sight never deceived me, only during some impressive eastern mirages, when the nearby cliff, serving as a mark, is transformed into multiple minarets under the astonished eyes of nightwatchmen. It never happens at home. They trust in Platon's words in Paris because they believe what is written in books. The would laugh at it in the countryside. One believes in it immediately in the second box, in the summer when the horizon begins to move. Everything is explained in the third box when fantastic visions brutally replace what is perceived. I am straying.

Thus he was sailing around the Mediterranean Sea when luckily he made a detour through Algiers where he found his wife at her piano, who was waiting for him and for adventure. Yes, the grand-daughter of the wine peddler from Baltimore. He just took the time to put his head under her umbrella and made an appointment to meet her in China the following year, for a possible wedding. In the meantime he was summoned to pilot to the Far East. One fine morning she left on a steamer to join him without really knowing what she was going to do there. The answer: seven children and the life of a lady. She is still living, beautifully amid the pine trees. I admire her, stable, light, a little evanescent, a contemporary of Chateaubriand and the decadent France. For breakfast she still drinks boiling water like the poor do over there. She pursues her long superb old age.

No, she said, I would never have married any other man but a sailor. You are a fool, my mother used to say, sailors are never home. They have a woman in every port. They are still as logs and when they put down their bags, one never knows what they are staring at. They are more absent even nearby than when you are waiting for them. Nevertheless I preferred them to those little tyrants who bring home every evening the complicated little miseries of their resentment.

Say, imagine a world where men would be all at sea. Fancy that paradise.... We would scratch the earth a little. We would feed pigs and geese. Occasionally we would have children, and the rest of the time would be for music. On ships, men might perhaps be removed enough to forget hatred and war. And if they tried their hands at it they would sink to the bottom. The shipwreck would be a peace philter. They would immediately be transformed into bees which die as soon as they sting, whose bellies burst at the first jab of a sword.

She also said: I wanted a sailor for another reason. Honesty does not exist on this earth. It is not possible, not practical. Never has a single truthful man ever been found. When the wind blows, the sail bends. Honesty cannot be a stable position. It is not enduring, it bends immediately. It lays down, it quickly tugs toward dishonesty. No one resists the wind. Should you stand in its way, it blows fiercer and knocks you down. Thus the whole world turns to dishonesty. This rule has no exceptions. It is the stable position and everything tends to its equilibrium. No, I never met a truthful man. Sometimes though I found a holy man. Holiness can discover means to rise against the wind. It is a stable position from the other side. Therefore honesty never belongs to this world, though holiness may be found in this world.

To be holy is to be detached. See them set sail and cast off the hawsers. God willing they are detaching themselves, they are loosening their cockle-shell. They are not very many aboard. They will be dancing atop five thousand meters as if pinned on top of the Mont Blanc or on the profile of the Karakorum mountains. No, they are not yet detached. See this complicated rig, these capstans, these coiled lines, these chains, ties everywhere. They know very well that when the first strong squall comes all that will fly away like a cobweb, like a ragged banner. Then another weighing occurs when the hawsers, the sails, the rigging have slipped off. God willing for the second time. Is it this time, once and for all, or still other times? One never stops weighing anchor. One never stops casting off the hawsers. Which cordage shall I loosen today? Yes, holiness is to fly.

I wanted a sailor for his gesture which he can and always knows how to do with emotion. To cast off. Have you heard sometimes the sound of a horn when a ship is getting under way? That little sob in the blindness of dawn? To cast off from the wharf, the port, the city, the walls and all the stories of envious and competitive men, when one's skin shrivels in the cold. To withdraw from the earth in order to rely on the wind. I wanted a sailor because a sailor flies. He doesn't swim like a fish or an oar, he flies. On arrival he touches ground, he lands on his rivals' shore. To cast off from the shores of a river or ocean is to enter the violent peace of the winds. She was quietly looking straight into my eyes. I wanted a sailor in order to marry a saint, to have a flying husband.

Listen, she said, to the adventure of the Malayan pirates. Everybody was dissuading me from sailing the small liners. Filth, time lost, money stolen, all kind of dangers. I found the small ships so peculiar though. No. I don't despise large ocean liners. I adore them. When I learned that they had disappeared, I wept over an entire lost culture. They were fabulous. I will tell you about them another time, she said. So, one summer I took the children, how many were they at that time I don't know. Besides, I was perhaps pregnant. Well. Instead of the direct ocean liner, I took the coastal steamer that goes from port to port like a milkman delivering milk door to door. It wasn't luxurious but the children were happy. They could move around, shout, run, play with the sailors. A week passed, the children were masters on board having taken over the ship. But to wrong me a catastrophe had to happen. One fine afternoon, pirates came on board. I didn't see them arriving. Between you and me, I think that they agreed to share the booty and ransom with the coastal steamers. They were not very reassuring, in rags, armed, gesticulating ruthlessly and screaming ferociously. No, I am not going to tell you about violence, rape, robbery or torture as in adventure novels. The children rushed upon them without hesitating as in a surprisingly new game. They jump up and down with glee, amazed at their alarming garb and sinister movements. They are in their arms, on their shoulders, pulling their belts, handkerchiefs and hats. The little one had pulled a saber and the red-haired one was blowing into a gun muzzle. I perceived the flickering moment of their waiver. The free-booters were for a brief instant between carnage and laughter, massacre and laissez-faire, or rather between the real and the imaginary. The swarm of children almost naked, sitting on their knees, clinging to their arms or perched on their heads transformed them instantly into an operatic troop. They were ridiculous, they felt it suddenly. They understood that everything was falling to pieces in a burst of laughter. They left embarrassed, uneasy, under the outcry of the brats who wanted to keep their toys longer. Our sailors didn't dare look at us. It was a beautiful victory, one of those you don't find in the books. I never forgot that day, she said. A real thing happened, did it not? Amidst the worst battles, clashes and scuffles, God knows how many an eighty year old woman has seen, I have always imagined a flock of clever kids who while dispersing a fight would immediately make the warriors look stupid and theatrical, transforming their wrath and hatred into carnival masks.

Or transforming into the massacre of the innocents, she said, turning around.

You could count on your fingers the seas the old sailor hadn't experienced, the salt spray on his face. The Aral Sea probably, and the Caspian Sea, I would think. However I had the advantage over him to have been in that interval between Spitsbergen and the edges of the ice floe. Then he wanted me to tell



him my story. I had gone higher than he had gone low. The grey clouds, the heavy sea when ice is forming. No, it isn't a dream or a vision, as one says when one hasn't been there, it's the very normal continuation between free running water and an icefield. I told the special fear of high latitudes. I see a definite anguish in dealing with each sea: a black one and a white one, a red one and a yellow one. Deadly green fears and terrible blue agonies belong to all seas, as you see. He had lived through them one after the other. You recognize a former sailor from his loyal shivering memories of such terrors.

Ninety-nine years of monastic life for three days of ecstasy is the sailor's lot, and so it is with the farmer, the writer, the lover. The simple holiness of the solitary anchorite. No. A full one hundred years of happiness. I no longer know how to count.

I do remember well the beginning. We were dredging on outer roads. A badly neglected chain with its loops and rusted links kept the anchor down. We were stopped around the Nile's delta, it was shown by the color of the water. The windlass needed repairs. It was loose. You may as well say that we couldn't do anything. From Djibouti on we had been powerless anyway. It took us half a day to break away from that confinement. The swell was becoming choppy, the wind strong, we couldn't stay tied up in that manner. We used a hatchet. We lost an entire line including its anchor. It was expensive, but we had to escape. Four hours later in the twilight, the storm indicated nine on the Beaufort scale. By my mid-watch we were already at ten. Yes it began. From there on, another world, another history, we no longer were part of this world.

The Admiralty reported us lost at sea with all hands. I am still speaking posthumously. But never mind. I stayed behind, I think, in that strange place where circumstances had thrust me ...

We no longer are part of this earth, ecstasy. Why? Because sometimes I walk on walls or bulwarks, because the floor rises perpendicular to the horizon. It gives way abruptly, I fly. I weigh thirty tons, one hundred tons, as much as the ship, when all flows back towards me like a flood. Off-hand on earth, seating, standing, walking or scaling, I know my weight as constant. My movements automatically take it into consideration. But you know the emaciated convalescent's unsteadiness, you know how much we are sensitive to the slightest variation of our weight. To a certain degree all this is mental, skeletal anchorites or fat buddhas. Now, my weight, the force that keeps my feet on the ground, my strength, levity, every instant is variable, irregular, varying at random, from the impact of a solid mass of steel to the flight of an empty feather. Joy. So, one of my corporeal invariances becomes a pure inconstant. When a thing is variable, changing to that point, you may as well say that it is cancelling itself. Try to fancy yourself being able to change your age every two minutes: sixty years, childhood, maturity, infancy. What a unique rapture, and if that were eternity? Imagine you could change your size as fast and as brutally, lengthwise, breadthwise, giantlike or dwarflike. What fabulous worlds would you see? We think that what is changing on the wild sea is the trihedral perception of height, width, length. In fact it does change: up, down, and out of sight. What is really changing is the weighty relationship to things. What is changing is our mainstay, that leaden pillar passing through the arch of our legs. We are no longer part of this earth, our base is ruptured. Ecstasy.

Archimedes, dripping wet and naked, came out of his bath, ran through the streets of Syracuse, shouting: I have found it. He had felt the force pulling him from under the water, the one that prevents you from drowning and lets you float, the improbable vertical arrow that brings you back to the lurch. He had discovered the only worthy idea, the gracious idea of moving water. The new idea is directed from bottom to top. Archimedes, naked, flies very high above a sunken Syracuse. Poor Newton, poor trifle, poor foot-soldier, poor force that stumbles and falls. Our world is oblivious to water, the earth's gravity and the sea's grace. I navigate above a glaucous translucence six thousand meters from earth. Forget water for a while, and see how we fly. Archimedes swam over water a thousand feet deep.

No, sailors are not from down here. The clipper is pierced with an arrow flying upward. The bow of the legs sustains it, vibrating, erect, stretched ready to fly away, incorporeal. My old parent, the sailor is hovering, clinging atop his pine trees, bird-like.

When I met him he had an insurance business. He had come back, from I know not where, to his childhood niche and he needed to make a living. Sometimes misfortune has a sense of humor. He wasn't bored in his little nook, but he was sumptuously incompetent in paper matters. It was the era when parasites were proliferating by multiplying administrative constraints. No one yet saw that this flood would bring them to supreme power. Like everybody else he was surprised by the surge. He was also surprised by that frantic hunger for security. They came to him for insuring themselves against bad weather. He signed contracts without blinking his blue eyes. He sold his business full of paradoxes, to conform to his children's advice, when his losses had gone beyond reason. Ever since I saw him become still. He had spent in eighty years all that a living body is capable of drive, flight, flexibility, adaptability, mobility, only permanence was left to him. He began to consume his untouched capital of eternity. I believe, he had a gigantic reserve in store. Only those who have sailed the seven seas have that ponderous cogency of stability.

One morning he came out of his room, asked to be driven to Bordeaux. It was an event after ten years of seclusion. He was pointing to a newspaper. An evening for the Capehorners was announced for that very day in capital letters, a band, a ball, a buffet, performers, a big party at the Grand-Theatre. He was a little surprised about it. He had sailed around the three capes in his youth he was ninety years old. But it was a ball for centenarians, he said. So-and-so I knew is dead, also this one, and that one. I thought myself a living corpse. Prepare the car, he said, I want to see for myself. I will perhaps know tonight who saw and lived through the millimeter of mercury I missed. Was it true? Which ship passed through that hole? At last, I will know the answer to that question, which captain? A man from Bordeaux perhaps, who knows ...

It was raining that evening, his daughter-in-law told me. Again he came out of his room, beaming, wearing an immaculate starched white collar, black tie, glittering patent shoes; only his navy blue suit, a little worn out, had a strong odor of moth balls. He looked fifteen to thirty years younger. Grand old gentlemen have such remissions. I knew some in love who seemed almost adolescent, shy, reserved, leaning a bit toward the future. He had perfumed his white handkerchief. All the family members who just finished dinner, looked at him as if they saw him for the first time. Like the Resurrected. It rained all through the trip. Firm-eyed he sat before the windshield wipers that were singing softly; he didn't say anything, he smiled in rapture. He was jubilant. He filled the space around him with compact joy. No, he was not simply coming back to his youth, he was overcoming everything in addition. In Bordeaux they were going to ask him questions, toast him with champagne, question him on the legendary sea-waters. He was coming back, he was bearing down on them. He had subdued insurmountable hurricanes. He had recognized rocks outside the sailing courses. He knew non-hydrographic details. Since he had sailed everywhere, he was the living memory of the world. Tonight it was his hour of recognition. He deserved it. He had never gotten it. It had come.

The car stops short at the foot of the steps. He steps out. He goes up quickly, he flies. He is in front of the illuminated doors. From the outside one hears the sounds of the orchestra. One hundred long-necked girls in light long dresses pass behind the glass door. The apotheosis with flowers is being prepared for him. Two polite young men standing on either side of the door. Sir? Good evening. Do you have your card? What card? Well, dear sir, your Cape-horner's card! I don't have that paper but I am a Capehornier. Who can tell? How do we know, if you don't have a card? No, you cannot come in.

He stepped down slowly in the rain.

They went home.

No, he didn't die of it.

The young men, after a boat-ride at sea with the girls, continue to dance under the long banderole honoring the Capehorners.

Essay from DETACHEMENT (Flammarion: Paris, 1986, 2nd ed.)

French title: Le Bal des Cape-horniers. pp. 51-76.

# INTERVIEW WITH J.R. COLOMBO

## By Jim Francis

Poet/editor/translator/anthologist/compiler John Robert Colombo lives and works in Toronto. In one role or another, he has been involved in the production of over seventy books. The variety of projects that he has been involved with preclude easy pigeon holing. On January 12, 1988 Jim Francis interviewed him at his home in North York. Mr. Colombo took the opportunity to comment, in a frank and provocative manner, on the state of Canadian literature.

JF: Found poetry and found art remove documents and objects from their original context and re-examine them, usually for the purpose of bringing to the surface ironic possibilities of interpretation. What implications do you see in this dislocation of intent when an object or piece of writing is removed from its original context and placed in a museum or book of poetry?

JRC: There is no dislocation, but there is a displacement. My view of the universe is of a "great collage," and if there is a creator he is a magnificent "collagist," a kind of gigantic Tristan Tzara playing with all the elements of himself and rearranging them. Man, to the degree to which he is a creative being, aesthetically re-arranges the elements of modern life. We also rearrange the past and the future. All art is found art. If I read *The Handmaid's Tale* I have found it; if I rework a passage from it you can find that passage. In this sense of the word time is an accident. As for dislocating things from their proper context, well, what is the proper context? The proper context is the one we've been told is the right one. Or the one that we somehow feel is correct, largely because of past experience. Found art has the mission, it seems to me, of showing us the aesthetic possibilities inherent in each and every molecule of creation. What I find intriguing is not the notion of the historian, but the notion of the *re-historian*. This is a term I've created — I know of no previous use of it. The concept strikes me as useful, and probably original. The historian's function is to interpret whatever evidence exists for a consistent view of the past and the present, and possibly the future, working with evidence that exists today. The *re-historian* broadens the definition of evidence to include everything that could possibly bear on the subject. Where the historian will use population figures, the *re-historian* will use anecdotes about population figures. "There used to be people who lived on that hill." I include as *re-historians* such systematizers as Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. Also such people as Eric Von Daniken, the "ancient astronaut man," and Immanuel Velikovsky, the "ancient catastrophe man," and Dale Russel, the legitimate anthropologist at the National Museum of Civilization. And also Michael Bradley, who is publishing this fall a book which I have written the preface to, which is concerned with the Holy Grail being found in Nova Scotia. The notion of the *re-historian* is of someone who, like the found poet, takes heterogeneous elements that were never united before and yokes them together — sometimes called metaphysical poetry!

JF: Post-modernism is a term that everyone seems to fashionably revile but have no better replacement for. One of its defining characteristics seems to be its audience. Art of all types that falls into that broad category directs itself to a very closed audience of, principally, artists and critics. At the same time, because its audience is one that seems to have an intimate knowledge of the material beforehand, there is a possibility for a much greater creative involvement for the audience. I see in your work a rather difficult contradiction. The found poetry and the found prose, and the reworkings and re-historiations of the material that comes from this big collage around you appeals to that sensibility. Yet the material you produce is very accessible, requires no intimate knowledge of particular isms or ists, and therefore almost automatically alienates the kind of artists and critics who would seem to be best prepared for that kind of interactive involvement.

JRC: Yes, that's actually a good observation. I respond to it on two levels: one personally, as a creator of original and found materials, but also at a distance, as somebody observing the post-modern scene. What I create I create because I want to do it, not to fill any program or formula. I'm not part of any scene. I regard the fact that the artist may step out of an aesthetic scene as one of his rights and privileges. He doesn't have to be a member of PEN, or whatever group may be deemed to be socially acceptable in that society. I've opted out of involvement in the aesthetic scene as represented in Canada by various groups. I carry on a correspondence with Richard Kostelanetz in New York, for instance, and feel quite close to him. Closer to him than I do to anybody at Coach House Press, who have consistently ignored everything I've ever done. It wouldn't even print at cost a book I put together. I don't feel abandoned by them, I feel that what I was doing was not what they were doing at the time. I'm not changing. I don't know whether they are interested in what I'm doing now. I basically couldn't care. I'm not interested in what they're doing now, which seems to me to be what they were doing in 1960, and continue to do two and a half decades later. What I'm doing currently is a refinement of what I started to do in the sixties. My position in Canadian literature has always been extraordinarily complicated. Perhaps complex is a better word. Because I was for many years one of the editors of the Tamarack Review, which was reviled by writers in Central Canada, and in Eastern Canada and Western Canada, as an organ of The Establishment. At the same time I was not published by the innovative press of the day, the avant gardists — for want of a better word the "Coach Housers." Because of this I suffered both as being branded a member of the establishment and dismissed an innovative artist — a sort of double duty. So I thought "I'll make a virtue of this" and simply continued to do what I wished to do. The major book that I published in the field of "advanced art," if you wish, *The Great Cities of Antiquity*, received not a single review. Despite the fact that Doug Barbour, in writing about me in a very complimentary piece in the Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, said it's my most important book. So I end up having been at the heart and core of Canadian literary development from the sixties to the late seventies, and not being taken seriously as a creative artist. That would have "killed" many lesser people, I think, but it basically just strengthened my resolve and disdain for the status quo. It was summarized for me by the response of Frank Davey refusing to publish the preface I wrote to the found poetry section of *Open Poetry*, an important anthology published in the States, because he was afraid of copyright violation. Now what kind of avant gardist worries about copyright violations. The very nature of the material is that it is expurgated, that it's purged, that it's ripped from another context. It struck me as being piddly. It didn't interest me. Besides, the thing had been published for two years anyway, and he wanted to reprint it in his magazine, but shied away from it. That's all literary gossip, and meant to tease. The broader issue is the fact that when a new sensibility arrives, and I think there is a post-modern sensibility, it begins to see that people express this sensibility to a greater or lesser extent among the forebears. For example, when post-modernism arrived it became obvious that in the 1920s there were in Europe two contrary and conflicting theories of art, both of which simultaneously influenced people. Now, this is my own formulation of it: I take the most influential movements of that time to be the contradictory Dada and the Bauhaus. Both, curiously, have connections with the city of Zurich. Dada represented a free-for-all — value free interpretation — and Bauhaus represented complete control. It strikes me that the post-modern period somehow found a new way of bringing together the random elements of Dada plus a complete and total control from the point of view of the artist. If anything, the post-modern sensibility, to the extent that it is a complete sensibility, strikes me as totally antithetical to the notion of subjective realism, which is the dominant mode in the popular arts. What happened in the mid-seventies ... despairing of the Canadian literary cultural community, I began to explore the genres, and staked out fantastic literature — by which I mean science fiction, fantasy fiction and "weird fiction." Science fiction principally set in the future, weird fiction set in the present, and fantasy fiction set in the past or some alternate world. These three constitute fantastic literature. I set myself the task of documenting the Canadian tradition in fantastic literature, and did that in a series of five books, beginning with *Other Canadas*, which was a ground breaking anthology in the field and is now acknowledged to be such. It established the parameters for the Canadian literary experience in its field. I am going to move on into other genre areas as well, and I regard this as totally consistent with the post-modern concern with moving away from psychological realism.



JF: One of the things that immediately springs to my mind when you associate fantastic literature with a post-modern sensibility is the work of Canadian science fiction writer William Gibson, from the west coast. His novel *Neuromancer* leans, initially, in the direction of what in the criticism of science fiction is called "hard science," i.e. it is dependent on a lot of technological explanations and projections rather than being concerned with sociological projections. Yet at the climax of the novel the language has become so self-referential that it removes the reader from any involvement with the prose as a representation of the subjective experience of the protagonist. My experience reading that novel crystallized for me the potential for the application of post-modern critical tools to fantastic literature.

JRC: Well, it's not an accident that one evolved and the other is found to be very popular. The science fiction writer uses the language differently than the realist writer. It has been pointed out that the science fiction writer may write "my world exploded" and it's meant literally! The planet earth exploded — or whatever planet the speaker is a native of. In this fashion the literature is rich in innovative references. Fantastic fiction is similarly rich in resonance. "Was it years or lives ago" can mean so much when viewed from the pen of Tolkien, for instance, rather than Dylan Thomas or Archibald Lampman. That's one aspect that interests me. The other aspect is the popularity of genre literatures. They've always been more popular than we give them credit for. The history of science fiction is a history of interactive fandom, something you find in poetry circles only among other poets. There is actually a public out there that reads, but doesn't write and doesn't regard itself in competition with the creator. Yves Theriault said the problem with every poet is he's a narcissist and a sadist. He wants to be put down and he wants to be loved at the same time. That is not true, to any degree, of the more craftsmanly and inspired of the science fiction, fantasy, and horror writers. In any case, my interests have moved into those areas because I felt I could make a significant contribution as an editor and as a compiler because nobody had ever bothered compiling this. The notion of found art, of course, led me, personally, into my quote books — these large compilations. There was one review in particular, of *Colombo's Canadian Quotations*, that this was an immense collage that Colombo had created, it was a work of art, it was a personal expression of a man's taste. It combined (here I'm hypothesizing from the comments) showmanship and scholarship in a very unusual way. Quite idiosyncratic and at the same time epic in its statement about the country and its stature. I believe that is true as well of my more recent collection, called *New Canadian Quotations*. As far as *Off Earth* is concerned, it's sort of another lost book. It exists there, I suppose in the stacks of libraries. But it tries to express some of the cosmic feelings that go with viewing Canada not as a mosaic but as a collage, and the universe as a heterogeneous collection of disparate elements.

JF: *Off Earth*, when it's not simply enjoying its own language play, is characterized by two quite contradictory threads in the text.

JRC: Contradictory means complementary, too.

JF: That's probably the answer you're going to give me when I finish my question, but what I noted was that on the one hand it rejoices in the potential present in a variety of things, such as space explorations and the imaginative rendering of Bach's appearance in Toronto in the 1980s. At the same time there were points that struck me as quite bleak and melancholy and dispirited in their tone. As you pointed out, saying that they are complementary resolves that to some extent, but it is still there, and it's very striking. I'm not quite sure how to assess it in terms of how the text operates as a whole.

JRC: Well, we think of space flight as a youthful undertaking. Certainly the astronauts were young. And the boundless notion of setting off to explore new worlds is a youthful concept. On the other hand the technology is extraordinarily ancient. You know, rockets and man's desire to explore this. So I regard exploration as a middle-aged technological attempt to probe its future and define it. I am middle-aged and I wrote this book in the last couple of years and I regard it as a middle-aged summary of my life so far and my future prospects. By that I mean as well the country's and the continent's and the globe's and the universe's. "Ours is a middle-aged sun" I wrote in another poem in another book. That comforts me. In other words, I've found an equivalence between the age of our sun and my own age and the age of the culture that surrounds me. I remember a remark of Irving Layton's, I rejoice — Irving said, but not quite in these words — I rejoice when I see a man, but I weep when I see mankind. I'm coming closer to that point of view, valuing more an individual and his achievement in the circumstances than I do cultural scenes or progressive movements or the mass of men. Now this is a point of expression: I expect that we all die with an idol or an ideal, and I want mine to be an ideal. I personally am very bleak about mankind. I don't regard mankind as something that looks after itself. It sort of bungles through and I don't see where it's pre-ordained to win through in any sense. Space flight and inner space flight seem to me complementary, and an attempt to find a way of technologically and artistically in coming to terms with the human predicament. For example, Jon Lomberg's contribution to the Voyager interstellar record is an immortal work of art. The only immortal work of art created in our time is the Voyager Interstellar Record done by Jon Lomberg. One of my prized possessions is a freehand rendered sketch of that, by Lomberg. It's in my study and I see it every day. It puts things into a cosmic perspective. At this point in my life my hero is not Rainer Maria Rilke or Walt Whitman, who are former heroes.

JF: I think part of my confusion in reading *Off Earth* stemmed from the habit of trying to place individual texts within a work into categories of positive and negative in perspective, or inward looking or outward looking in perspective.

JRC: Well, you're looking for a simplistic response, and that's a journalistic response. A journalist presents a millionaire capitalist as a great, outgoing person, but if you know him from the vantage point of his wife or children you know him as a totally different individual. If you are looking at a work of art for a consistency of message I think you're looking for the wrong things in art. Art shows complexity, contradiction and confusion. The poetry of Walt Whitman is always taken to be the great outflowing, the great acceptor of multitudes, and so on. If you look at the work very clearly you can see that he above all was aware of individual failure and confusion and doubt. The mere fact that he had to state "I am multitudes" meant that he was concerned about the fact that he wasn't. Look at Rilke's work — one of the great poet's of all time — you will find as well a deep sense of despair coupled with an overflowing joy. I once asked George Grant, author of *Lament for a Nation* — a book, by the way, that I edited for McClelland and Stewart — how he could encourage the youth when his outlook for Canada was so negative. He said, "I have to live in the world, too." So the world is riddled with contradictions, and the degree to which these contradictions appear in a work of art is the degree to which that work of art is great. I would say this, that most of the work that is published by Rampike is simplistic, in the programmatic sense that we have discussed, and doesn't present the contradiction and drama of eros and thánatos, or whatever elements you care to represent — the conscious and the unconscious or the innovative and the conservative — battling it out. The degree to which a work of art battles it out, and does so in a coherent fashion, is the degree to which it is great. By "great" I mean we might read it tomorrow.

JF: Correct me if I'm wrong, but I understand that you are putting together a new anthology of horror stories.

JRC: I've published with Michael Richardson a collection of Canadian horror fiction, *Not To Be Taken At Night*, the first ever to appear, published by Lester & Orpen-Dennys some years back. It's being reprinted in Britain right now in mass market paperback. We're working on a sequel to that and we're looking for contributions to that all the time. I feel this is potentially a growing area. These are works by serious writers that deal with dislocation in a serious fashion. I'm working on, at any one time, probably ten projects. I'm like a pipeline that has liquids running through at various speeds, and as long as the various speeds are maintained the liquids don't mix. If anything slows down it gets to be a cluttered mess. I try to push ahead with whichever project seems to strike fire at that time, or has some publisher expressing some commercial interest. Obviously I turn my attention to that. I'm also doing an anthology of *snow*, a most characteristic substance I suppose. That one is slow moving. And I've just completed *Mysterious Canada*, a magnificent collection of Canadian contributions to the realm of the paranormal, which will have about a hundred illustrations by the time it's done. Etc., etc. — these are large projects that are under way.

JF: Your involvement in these large projects gives you, presumably, access to a lot of work that a lot of other people are doing. What do you think of what you are seeing?

JRC: You might say I try to take a god's eye view. I try to see things objectively, from the point of view of what's happening. On the literary front I don't see much happening in Canada. I'll limit myself to that at present. I'm not particularly impressed with the generation of the eighties. At least not to the degree that I was with the generation of the sixties. I see more fruitful activity in the genre area than I do in the mainstream. And I see virtually nothing in the avant garde. Perhaps that's a problem I have. I perhaps don't know who the avant gardists are, and I find myself immune to the charms of video art.

JF: That strikes me as ironic, if for no other reason than that the video artists seem to be paving the way for, or at least promoting much more strenuously than artists in any other field, the possibility for creative interaction between artist and audience.

JRC: I don't believe there's a need for creative interaction between artist and audience. I want the audience to be an audience and the artist to be an artist. I'm aware of the fact that I'm plunging a dagger into the heart, and it might be deflected by one of the ribs, but I don't believe there's any need for any further interaction. It seems to me that it went far enough with Nam June Paik and the others in the late sixties, and it really has been an experiment that failed. Much was learned, and it was consolidated, but it was a negative experiment. Failed avant-gardists (derrière gardists, I call them) are continuing in that fruitless field. Somebody who is working his way out of it, I hope, is Richard Kostelanetz, who's work I follow. He's one of the few who takes a planetary interest in the innovative art of the period. Nonetheless, I feel very little is to be gained by doing this. It's not a dead end, it's a crescent. You seem to be turning in interesting ways, but you're coming back to where you started. I do not wish to discourage anybody from pursuing any path that he or she wishes. On the other hand, I personally don't see much there, in terms of production, and I find the people who take these interests seriously in the eighties doing so to the detriment of their originality.

JF: West coast writer Brian Fawcett has called Canadian literature a "full balloon." There's no room for anything new in the established Canadian literary scene, and things have to start happening outside of that. Frank Davey has indicated that he sees the literary presses that grew out of the 1960s as nearing the end of their natural life span. New literary presses will have to be created by a younger generation.

JRC: Well, I felt they were on their last legs in 1970. I haven't publicly stated so, for an interview or in print, because I am basically with them, you know. They are other writers, serious writers. But I think the aesthetic is shot. It was old-fashioned when it began. I was very turned on by bp nichol's first book, which I reviewed favourably in the Tamarack Review. I thought it was fine. I also thought it was twenty years out of date, then, because I was familiar with most of the writers who had influenced him. But it was happening here, in Canada, and it was important that it was happening here. However, it has continued to happen and happen and happen and happen, and it is exactly the same thing happening in the eighties as was happening in the sixties. You see established publishing houses paying no attention to serious new writers and you find the underground press dominated by coteries and cliques. Brian Fawcett claims that mainstream Canadian Literature is a clique; I claim that the underground is a clique! It's more cliquish and more extreme. I remember being on Tamarack and discussing this with Bob Weaver and Bob pointed out that Tamarack published a wider variety of writers than Coach House did. And it was true. We included all kinds of people, whereas Coach House — to make its point, quite legitimately — decided to highly specialize. As for Anansi press, one year I personally wrote more books than they published. However, each to his own speed. There's no money in it, and no prestige and no fame, so you might as well do what you want to do in the field. That being the case, I'm surprised there aren't more people doing extraordinary things. What I find is the same thing being done over and over again. Somebody like Christopher Dewdney strikes me as a poet who creates in me no emotional reaction to his work, which is perhaps my fault, I don't know. Intellectually, I think he's doing something unusual, but he's been recognized and he's being published by the major houses so I can hardly consider him an avant gardist.

JF: I don't think he wants to be either.

JRC: Perhaps not. I see myself as neither original nor old-fashioned, but as a transmitter. The notion of originality is highly overrated in our culture. If you look at the arts from a broad perspective you'll see that there's very little that's original. Originality generally means the introduction of a new subject matter, sometimes a new attitude. Not generally a new language, though that may come. Perhaps as I get older I begin to see Confucius and his transmission of materials from one culture to another and the religious metaphor that that involves, the transmission from Mount Mirarou and Shambala to our present towns and villages, of more interest to me.





# RÉPARATION DE POÉSIE

## Par Jean-Claude Gagnon

"Performance, espace Jacques Donaghy" Jean-Claude Gagnon



"Considérant le fait que dans l'esprit des gens, la poésie est souvent identifiée aux 'recueils' ou 'plaquettes' qui ressemblent de plus en plus à des livres de cuisine, lisses, économes, privilégiant l'absence à la générosité des signes, comme d'autres nous avons tenté cet effort; il s'agit d'étendre la poésie à toutes les activités artistiques, de la sortir du ghetto des 'plaquettes', des 'récitals', des 'soirées' et des 'nuits' de plus en plus espacées." (1)

Depuis trois ans, la préoccupation poétique (ou anti-poétique, c'est la même chose) m'a conduit vers la naissance et la maturation de mon concept "Réparation de Poésie" et de sa prothèse: le sous-concept "l'abominable homme des lettres" (3) vers le point culminant qui a eu lieu chez Obscure à Québec, en octobre '86, se matérialisant par une exposition et un mini festival (4) de performances; aussi j'ai récidivé avec *Surfaces Poétiques Générales* (démonstrations et installations): 13 participants (tes); l'événement fut présenté à la Galerie l'oeil de Poisson en Janvier '88.

Au niveau de la "plaquette" (5), mon alternative est mon travail dans le domaine du livre d'artiste, de mes collages, de ma production pour magazines, Art Postal, Copy Art. (6)

Pour ce qui nous intéresse ici, c'est-à-dire l'aspect sonore: c'est le récital de poésie "poetry reading" qui va maintenant "passer au cash". J'entend si souvent les mêmes clichés au point que j'aimerais voir le poème performé par des animaux sauvages, particulièrement par des cervidés d'Amérique: des orignaux. (Réf: Performance présentée lors de l'événement: surfaces Poétiques Générales, avec Denis Belley à la guitare: L'original à la source de l'humanité et poète sonore international.)

Pour l'instant, je pratique et théorise ce que j'appelle des "lectures instrumentales", c'est-à-dire, des lectures de textes poétiques neutres à l'aide d'instruments de musique (Guimbardes, harmonicas, flûtes, saxophones, clarinettes, peignes, etc.) avec une sauce plus ou moins piquante à l'humour improvisé avec des être humains devant.

"Surfaces Poétiques Générales" Jean-Claude Gagnon  
Photo: Michel Belanger



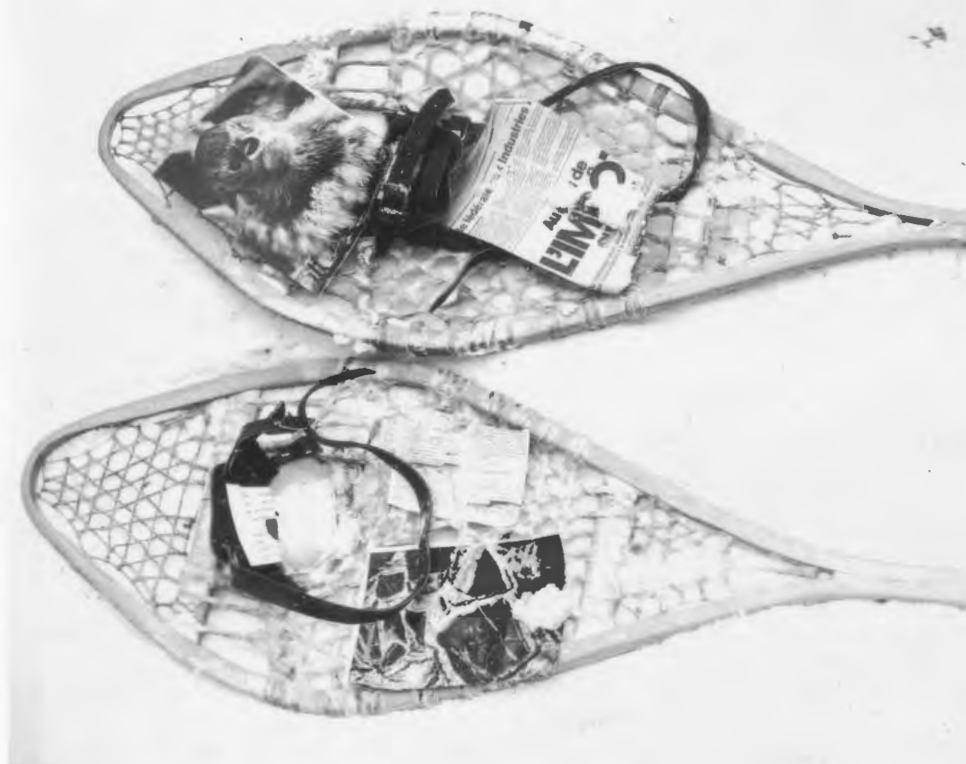
"Formalisme Rural, Formalisme Forestier" Jean-Claude Gagnon

Je regarde souvent d'autres êtres humains utiliser leur bouche et je me dis qu'il faudrait peut-être tordre la racine du mot, la secouer pour faire tomber les chicots jaunes usés par une certaine poésie, la sur-utilisation du mot, la secouer pour extraire les composantes du tartre poétique, comme un fruit mûr. (7)

Mettre quelque chose dans l'organe, détourner le procédé avant même d'éructer le son. (C'est un fait, beaucoup d'êtres humains performant le poème sonore donc techniquement parlant, je n'ai pas envie d'aller m'empiler sur d'autres qui le font mieux que moi. Je ne suis pas là pour imiter mais pour m'amuser, il y aura toujours de la place pour cela et aussi pour la prétention.)

Donc je passe par un filtre; ce sont les instruments de musique; cela devient une "free reading improvisation". Je me gonfle le verbe comme une sorte d'Albert Ayler du son enfariné; (de cette manière j'élimine l'éternel fond de musique binaire galopant derrière le performer; je fais ainsi d'une bière qu'ils occasionnent). Je traîne ma propre rythmique avec ma gorge, ma langue ou ma cravate; je réussis même à commettre des petites chansonnettes de poésie sonore comme "A GAGA GOUGOU" qui me sont suggérées par le débit ou le dépit du matériau lu. Le "recueil" utilisé est choisi au hasard dans une corbeille (8); de cette manière l'auteur du "recueil" n'est pas visé par les gestes que je pose; pour moi, dès l'instant où je place la "plaquette" sur le bûcher (le lutrin ou la déchiqueteuse à papier/dés-imprimante), cela devient autre chose; soit de la "stand up comic sonor poetry" ou de la lecture instrumentale improvisée ou les deux à la fois.

La signification sort par brides ou ne sort pas du tout, alors elle est absorbée, réingurgitée par le filtre et alors le lecteur devra se brosser les dents. Il entend quelque chose; les êtres humains en face de lui entendent autre chose, d'autres s'en moquent et font connaître leur appréhension par un mouvement tentaculaire. La chose sonore produite par l'abominable homme des lettres couvert du sang de ses victimes (texte déchiqueté et collé sur une chienne) parvient régulièrement à déclencher chez les êtres humains devant lui un poème sonore dans sa plus riche et grasse expression: UN MAGNIFIQUE RIRE, POETIQUE, SONORE, RECONNAISSANT.



"Formalisme Rural, Formalisme Forestier" Jean-Claude Gagnon

### Notes

- 1/ Revue Inter no. 34, éditorial.
- 2/ Journal le Soleil, article de Marie Delagrave, 9 novembre '86.
- 3/ Inter no. 34, article de Guy Durand: RÉPARATION DE POÉSIE.
- 4/ Je n'aime pas l'expression "mini-festival". Un mini-festival est-ce une mini-jupe? Cependant j'aime bien les mini-jupe, j'en porte une parfois dans les grandes occasions, surtout depuis la tenace vague rétro concernant les éternelles "années soixantes". Donc précisons que ce festival (cette mini-jupe) et l'exposition mettaient en jeu au total 55 êtres humains provenant de 75 pays différents. Héhé! Les sceptiques seront confondus.... Cette expression est empruntée à un humoriste québécois bien connu: le Capitaine Bonhomme. A chaque fois qu'il exagère quand il narre ses aventures rocambolesques; il se fait rabrouer par son public; alors il se sert de cette maxime, cela ne marche jamais; peu après il diminue la portée de ses affirmations du début. C'est d'accord j'ai compris: 55 êtres humains d'une dizaine de pays différents.
- 5/ La "plaquette" ou le "recueil", c'est le petit livre de poésie épongeant malgré lui les doléances de toutes sortes de nos "pauvres poètes".
- 6/ Inter no. 22/23, article de D.-J. Côté: Edition, marge, bricolage, page 106.
- 7/ Remarquez cet élan, ce rythme saccadé, comme celui d'un cervidé Le lecteur instrumental ne serait-il pas lui-même un orignal?
- 8/ Le performeur a les yeux bandés.



# LITERARY VIDEO (1975, 1987)

By Richard Kostelanetz

"Of course, in this electronic age of computers, radio and television, the writer can no longer be someone who sits up in his garret pounding a typewriter." — Marshall McLuhan (1966)

Literary video differs from other video art in its base of a text whose language is enhanced, rather than mundane — a text that is conceived within the traditions of modernist literature and a contemporary sense of verbal possibilities.

Literary video differs from video literary-reportage in which, typically, a poet is interviewed or is seen reading aloud; for in literary video, the author becomes an artist, exploiting the indigenous possibilities of the new medium — instant playback, overdubbing, selective vision, synthesis of both images or letters/words/sentences in live time, image distortion and so forth. In literary video, the screen is intelligently active, the author-artist visually enhancing his own language; in video reportage, by contrast, the camera's eye is visually dumb.

Literary video draws upon both literary materials and video possibilities, and integrates them, rather than keeping them separate; so that word complements image and vice versa.

The video medium itself is closer to books than to film, because the TV screen is small and perceptually partial, like the printed page, rather than large and enveloping, like the movie screen; and literary video is customarily "read" like a book, in small groups or alone. (Most of us feel no qualms about interrupting someone watching television or reading a book; by contrast, people at a movie remain undisturbed.) Perhaps the most appropriate location for a home video monitor is in a bookshelf.

Because the video image is drastically less precise than a film image, and the former's light source is not in front of the screen but behind it, video is conducive not to realism but to anti-realism; video, unlike film, cannot produce a *trompe d'oeil*. Video instead offers an arsenal of techniques for producing image-distortion less feasible in film (but comparable to the sound-distortion capabilities of the machines that process recording tape). Such distortions generate a surrealism that, because of the size of the video screen, is perceptually more painterly, if not literary, than filmic. Looking at the source of light is a more hypnotic experience than the film-viewer's looking with it, and the close physical proximity of the screen to the video-viewer further encourages the experience of dreaminess.

Because the video screen is so much smaller than the movie screen, video is not effective in reproducing proscenium theater; even conventional films look ungainly within such a tiny frame (while subtitles are almost illegible). Video is more conducive to outlines than details; to individuals than choruses; to faces (and parts of faces) than milieus; to titles than subtitles; to one or two voices, rather than several.

The video image tends to be more flat (two-dimensional), more concisely structured, more sketchy and less cluttered — it tends to be less like a film than snapshot or a book. The visual imprecision of the video image, in comparison to film or photography, forces the viewer to fill in the picture, as he does in reading in comic strip; and this participational process can increase the degree of audience involvement.

Literary video should transcend both the familiar representationalism of conventional television and the conventional syntax of familiar literature; it should also transcend those constraints of subject, theme and truth that imprison the story-telling of commercial television; it should present kinds of imagery and continuity, as well as visual-verbal perceptions, that are totally unavailable to every other medium.

An artist making a videotape may, unlike the filmmaker, examine his finished project immediately upon completing it, and may at that point decide to reshoot it in whole or in part; and process of execution resembles, both temporally and perceptually, writing, and rewriting, at the typewriter.

The video medium lends itself to the presentation of continuous movement and, thus, not to poetry but to prose and to narrative.

Television is a mass medium; video, a private one. As television is treasured for its credibility, especially when bringing the day's news into our homes, video should be valued for its incredibility. Literary video is destined for an audience that is ideally both visually sensitive and literate; television for an audience that is neither.

As a veteran writer, I bring language, with which I am familiar, to video, which I have scarcely explored. Though I refuse to abandon one art to do another — that was a seventies fashion — I am, as a creative writer, presently experimenting not just vertically within literary arts but horizontally, with media other than the traditional small rectangular pages familiar to literature. Recently I have been casting language in silkscreened prints, offset posters, ladderbooks, collections of cards, audiotapes and holograms as well as, now, videotapes.

Remarkably few "writers" have made creative video, though an army of poetic eminences have had their faces and voices memorialized on black-white videotape. It is surprising that no literary funding agency has ever, to my knowledge, supported literary video; for reportage about writers, that artistically lesser form, rips off all the available funds.

In my earliest videotapes, done in 1975, I was particularly concerned with relating language to synthesized abstractions, overdubbing, visual feedback and image distortion, among other capabilities indigenous to video. For the text of "Plateaux," which relates stages in a love affair in one-word paragraphs (and was subsequently reprinted in my book *More Short Fictions* [1980]), I introduced an evolving moire pattern whose languid circularity complements the unrelenting circularity of the original narrative. For "Excelsior," which switches rapidly between two voices seducing each other (and is also reprinted in *More Short Fictions*), I created two abstract designs and then swiftly alternated between them, eroticizing the text exclusively with rhythmic abstract imagery. (Recently, several years after he saw it, Nam June Paik told me that this he especially liked.) These two pieces were included in my first 3/4" videotape, *Three Prose Pieces* (RK Editions, 1975), where the central work is "Recyclings." Here a sequence of nonsyntactic prose texts (drawn from a 1974 book of that title) is read by several nonsynchronous voices, all of which are mine. The color image consists only of pairs of lips (all mine), moving synchronously with audible speech. The first section has one voice and one pair of lips; the last (and sixth) section has six voices and six pairs of lips, each generation of lips-voices reading the same nonsyntactic text nonsynchronously.

My second videotape is based upon my book *Openings & Closings* (1975), a collection of single-sentence stories that are alternately the openings and the closings of hypothetically longer fictions. While each of these stories radiates outward (or forwards or backwards, to be specific), they have no intended relation to each other; and there are no intentional connections within the entire work, other than scrupulous discontinuity. Here I instructed the video engineers to alternate between color for the *Openings* and black-white for the *Closings*, and connected each system of hues to its own camera crew. My second instruction was that each crew make its current visual image of me seated in a chair reading aloud as different as possible from the one(s) before. My aim was to realize visually the enormous leaps of time and space that characterize the book's text. *Openings & Closings* is, incidentally, the only videotape I have made so far in which an image recognizable as me appears on the screen. (That fact alone is a measure of how far most of my work departed from the conventions of writing and writers on videotape.)

My next work, *Declaration of Independence* (1976), is based upon a text of that title that I published as early as 1975 (and reprinted in my book of *Prose Pieces* [1987]). Here the words of the original historic U.S. document are systematically reversed to appear backwards word by word, implicitly realizing within language my own declaration of independence from the conventions of normal syntax. (In that respect, my concerns here echo those of *Recyclings*.) On the screen are four pairs of superimposed bearded lips, each visibly different in size, reading this "Declaration of Independence" simultaneously (roughly), from beginning to end. Once the joke is caught, the tape can be very funny, with the kind of humor that thankfully does not diminish upon rehearing. Since I am as an artist not adverse to providing clues (or writing manifestoes), I added a continuous line of explanatory gloss that, in capital letters larger than those of televised movie subtitles, crawls from time to time along the bottom of the screen.

That last move represented my first discovery of the video character-generator — the machine mentioned before that electronically translates my typings into letters that appear on the screen. The text I chose was *Epiphanies* (in progress since 1979), which are single-sentence stories that, unlike those mentioned before, are not the openings or closings but the epiphany, which is to say the resonant moments that illuminate an entire fiction. I put the words of these *Epiphanies* (and only their words) on the video screen, one story at a time, in various typographical arrangements; and let them dominate the screen for durations roughly equal to the length of the stories. This videotape is very much about the experience of alternative reading — not only in concert with others (usually) but at a speed of presentation that cannot be controlled by the reader (unlike the conventional reading experience). Someone remembering silent movies has joked that this video *Epiphanies* is "all titles, no action," and that is true, as the visible words contain the entire action of each story. All these early works were put on a single VHS cassette titled *Early Literary Videotapes* (1987).

I planned my next video for character-generator, *Partitions*, in 1980, but didn't get to realize it until 1986. Acknowledging the limitations of the character-generator donated to me — one typeface, a memory able to retain eight pages in sequence — I wanted to reveal words within other words, to enhance language by revealing what is buried in it, within a sequence of eight images. In the title word, for instance, are six words (pa, par, part, art, tit, it), each new word incorporating a letter of its predecessor, all of which could be shown before returning to the source word. As this machine offered the possibility of up to ten lines of horizontal type, I decided first to subject only one word to such eight-step partitioning, and then two words at a time, three words, up to ten words, all of which would metamorphose simultaneously, incidentally making the action on the screen ever more difficult to read as it became more populous. As a result, the exploration of the possibilities of language within a severe compositional constraint parallels the exploration of possibilities within the technological constraints of a severely limited letter-making machine.

The character-generator I used in these video *Epiphanies* and *Partitions* is rather primitive, compared to what is available. This machine could use, as noted before, only one style of lettering in one size; it was also limited to white letters on a black field, in a fixed grid of 24 characters across and ten lines high. By contrast, more sophisticated machines can use various typefaces, expandable to any size, available in a variety of colors, without any limitation on the number of lines. They can send words into the visual field from any place within the screen (in, say again, a steadily increasing visual crescendo) and then have words perform such acrobatic tricks as flipping over or turning inside out. I presently want to exploit such character-generators for video writing that will not supercede the printed page but become another medium for heightened, poetic language.



Collage images by Marguerite Dehler



# PERFORMANCE AND SPECTACLE IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL AGE\*

By Robert C. Morgan

The terms "performance" and "spectacle" represent two extremes of representation in the post-industrial age. Whereas the former suggests participation in an event, whether it be theatrical or non-theatrical, the latter implies an illusory involvement of the self as determined by the seduction of its subject/object complicity. To observe a spectacle, whether it be a New Years party in Times Square or a broadcast of the Sunday NFL game in one's livingroom, presupposes that the receiver's gaze is somehow involved with everything that is going on, even if it is outside of one's peripheral vision. Rarely does the voyeur assume that he or she is being numbed by the non-action of the spectacle as an arbitrary indulgence. The ego is immediately posited toward the Other. A kind of pseudo-erotic bond is established, a rendezvous. Watching the spectacle is a passive mediation, rather than an active participation. There is a certain obsessiveness one may feel while watching a computerized election scoreboard during a Presidential campaign. To watch such an event may relinquish any connection one might feel in motivating a decision to act; instead the gaze prevails somewhere between gross entertainment and agitated relaxation.

According to the French theorist Guy Debord, the spectacle represents "the false consciousness of time." It is determined by the presence of the commodity system, the predisposition toward material things and titillating events, such as publicity and advertising, which determine the direction of the viewer's gaze toward the acquisition of things — objects to be consumed — as if to displace the absence left by the self somewhere else, in this case, within the realm of seduction and purchases. The role of the spectacle is one of seduction. The ploy is primary narcissism, the cult of the vacant self, mindlessly feeding the void with material impermanence.

In his book, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Dubord makes the following observation:

"The spectacle obliterates the boundaries between the self and world by crushing the self besieged by the presence-absence of the world and it obliterates the boundaries between true and false by driving all lived truth below the *real presence* of fraud ensured by the organization of appearance. One who passively accepts his alien daily fate is thus pushed toward a madness that reacts in an illusory way to this fate by resorting to magical techniques. The acceptance and consumption of commodities are at the heart of this pseudo-response to a communication without response." (219)

The technique of making a spectacle is contingent upon the manipulation of signs. To manipulate signs in a convincing manner is to have power. Advertisers became aware of this phenomenon during the 1920s. At first the manipulation of signs was influenced by exorbitant speech, that is, how to translate the dramaturgical nuances of the spoken word into seductive phraseology.

The seduction of language could be performed by most anyone. Recent French Freudian theories have made it clear that language is not a transparent veil that reveals motives and thoughts, but, in fact, constitutes a mask of conflicting desires. Language conceals, hides, and discredits real motives and thoughts. Images can perform in an even more obscure fashion. When speech is combined with imagery, the ideogrammatic references can make an utterly convincing argument in behalf of the product-referent, whether it be a commodity or an ideological system, represented in either secular or religious terms.

In recent years, the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard has developed a theory of Simulacra which applies to the problem of the spectacle in contemporary mass culture. By echoing the earlier polemics of such American social critics as Lewis Mumford, Baudrillard reiterates the notion that advertising signs have become so completely pervasive in our social structure, and consequently within our more intimate biases toward things, including other people, particularly those whom we do not know or that we think we disagree with, people such as Cubans, Sandinistas, or Palestinians, that we simply direct our lives according to a maze of reproductions, counterfeit merchandise, and the acceptance of lies as normative behavior.

Spectacles occur within the public sphere; they permit us to belong to the mass mind, the non-thinking elite who presumably owns the biggest and most impressive lifestyles. Such a need for spectacles is reflected on current television soaps, such as *Knots Landing* or *Falcon Crest*, merely two examples which have fizzled the minds of middle America over the past decade. These broadcast spectacles function as escape valves the way capital punishment functions for the wealthy in the state of Florida. To meet the conditions of crime is simply a matter of substituting another condition of crime. Immediately there is a stalemate, a neutralization process which is accepted as the normative power structure, as law and order, as the breeder of more spectacles. Baudrillard has suggested that one reason why fascism is the site of such interest and attraction, particularly in recent TV miniseries and docudramas, is that we suffer from a "loss of the real." "In order to compensate," says Baudrillard, "we have made a fetish of the period prior to this loss — the period of fascism" or, specifically, the period of World War II.

Any subject matter is fodder for the spectacle. Advertising, docudramas, sit coms, publicity of various kinds are all a type of soft pornography which is meant to attract and suspend gratification of the beholder. The manipulation of signs can be obscured in a most convincing way. High tech communications can incite a sense of hyperreality that millions will understand and accept as the truth. The famous example, of course, was the radio spectacle of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* several decades ago. Once the ploy for entertainment was understood, of course, people relaxed; but during the spectacle itself, people were terrified. Listeners were, perhaps, terrified as much by the power of the media as by the narration of the fantasy as it was being transmitted.

Good advertisers know that a message should not be made to appeal to millions, but should be made to appeal to a single individual on the most intimate level. Television, of course, is the perfect repository for such messages. Whereas cinema has more or less been demystified in recent years to the extent that the average moviegoer will understand when special effects are being used, the power of television still reigns. Television has maintained its imperative conceptual persuasiveness for nearly four decades. It is the hearth of desire in the everyday home. It is the place where solace is expected and maintained, where violence is perpetuated, where standardized emotions block any hope for significant dialogue. It is, in essence, pure spectacle.

The signs of advertising and mass culture are mistakenly related to our lives. By this I mean that they appear recognizable not so much because we have bought specific products or seen specific programs but because we have understood the ideology of the spectacle as an implicit part of the fabric of mass culture — and it has become increasingly more difficult to distinguish between mass culture and other forms of personal identity.

I would now like to turn away from the problem of spectacle within mass culture and focus attention upon the concept of performance as an activity in which the spectacle has been appropriated. This is not to suggest that spectacles are so easily definable or containable — or that they necessarily speak for themselves, because often they do not. Spectacles are highly complex displays which require an even more complex psychology of receivership. There is no way that we can isolate the situation of the spectacle apart from our lives; we can only be alert to the phenomenon and to the type of behavior which it implies: a sort of aggressive non-action and a relatively mindless pursuit toward the deference of meaning.

In the late 1950s artists in New York were beginning to recognize the human limitations of mass culture, though on a somewhat naive level. This became apparent in poetry, the so-called Beat generation, the rock and roll of black singers. In particular, and in the work of visual artists, such as the abstract expressionists: the hard-drinking, tough-minded action painters who exhibited their work on Tenth Street in the Village.

The "Happenings" movement, as it was so named by Allan Kaprow, came in response to the severe inwardness suggested by the angst-ridden painters of the immediate post-war era. As a painter who grew out of the abstract expressionist era in New York, Kaprow became interested in exploring the implications of painting as a gestural and choreographic activity apart from its relationship to the art object. According to Kaprow, the mediumistic accessibility of paint and canvas did not automatically qualify an artist's intent in making a work of art. In other words, art — painting — involved something more than materials, subject matter, and technique. The issue was one of content. How does an artist discover content in the process of making art?

The belief that art could carry its own set of meanings, whether or not art existed as a static object, characterized the "Happenings" which Kaprow and others developed between 1958-59. By the early 1960s the Happenings movement gathered considerable momentum in New York as a transitional phrase between abstract expressionism and pop art. Examples of work produced in this period would include Kaprow's *Courtyard*, Claes Oldenburg's *Injun*, and Jim Dine's *Car Crash*. It is curious that with few exceptions, namely Robert Whitman and Kaprow himself, most of the artists associated with Happenings gradually evolved their concerns toward pop art or a style of aesthetic commentary upon the popular culture of the 1960s. These would include Oldenburg, Dine, George Segal, Lucas Samaras, and Red Grooms.

By 1970 Kaprow had temporarily exhausted the concept of the public spectacle in art — or the "metaspectacle," to borrow a term from Susan Sontag — and began to concentrate more on political, social and psychological concerns through metaphorical strategies. These eventually became identified as "Activities" — a term which Kaprow appropriated from the theoretical writings of Michael Kirby.

Kaprow developed the format for the Activities largely as a result of a growing interest in social theory, specifically the work of Goffman and Bertwhistle. The Activities were radically different from the earlier Happenings in that they borrowed less from the spectacles of mass culture and were more focused on the politics of human behavior, the structure of intimacy, and the interactive relationship between people and topical events which carried metaphorical significance. In a piece called *Sweet Wall* (1970), which might be seen as a transition between the early Happenings and the later Activities of the 1970s and 1980s, Kaprow set the location in a vacant lot near the west side of the Berlin Wall. The placement of the work, geographically-speaking, is crucial to the historical, political, social, and personal intentions which ultimately give significance to the idea or the work's intention. Sponsored by Rene Block, a former West Berlin art dealer (who, coincidentally, represented the work of Joseph Beuys), Kaprow's *Sweet Wall* was built and demolished in twelve hours. It was a free-standing wall, about six feet high which used loaves of fresh bread and jam as mortar. *Sweet Wall* can be interpreted as signifying the presence of a wall — any wall, any division of space or ideology — as an arbitrary structure with prescribed references, whether they be public or private in function or symbolic connotation.

In two later works, called *Air Condition* (1973) and *Time Pieces* (1973), the emphasis was clearly designed in terms of how the body responds to systemic time. In *Air Condition* the body is made wet, then allowed to dry naturally over a duration of time. In *Time Pieces* the heartbeat and pulse rates of two partners, interacting with one another, are recorded and exchanged by using a cassette audio-recorder and notation pads. Each of these Activities illustrate the concept of non-theatrical performance as designated by Kaprow in an article published in *Artforum* in 1976. In contrast to the spectacles of mass culture and the metaspectacles of art culture, such as Happenings and Earthworks, Kaprow Activities are a form of non-theatrical performance which concentrates upon the personal, subjective mode of performing and are not contingent upon the voyeuristic or fetishistic implications given to the spectularity of an audience. In other works, non-theatrical performance exists in spite of an audience, often as a hermetic process or self-appointed task, in which the engagement is dependent only upon the idea or context of operation provided by the artist's statement. For Kaprow — in contrast to Debord and Baudrillard — the contemporary performance is not self-effacing or abnegating in the sense that one "disappears" into the strata of mass culture through an immediate subjection to the encoding of signs. (If the disappearance of the artist occurs as it did in a recent work performed at the Zabriskie Gallery in New York where Kaprow worked as a factotum for two weeks, then the disappearance merely reinforces the presence of the self as the famous artist who defies the rules of hegemony handed to him by the art world structure.) Thus, non-theatrical performance, as defined and practiced by Kaprow, is concerned with self-definition and rejuvenation through attention to those kinds of actions which are normally evaded in the observation of the self as the self is otherwise impacted, pressured, and distorted by the legitimation of power which is always constituted by way of mass culture.

Performance art, at its best, differs from the spectacle in its orientation toward the self as a source of rejuvenating energy in a highly secularized world which is constantly being mediated by existing systems of power. Given the post-industrial emphasis upon electronic information display, performance art has the potential for offering new concepts of tactile involvement with reality that connect us with important ideas, perceptions, and experiences. While the passage of information through electronic coding devices has the potential to improve conditions for living in the post-industrial world. If these devices are not hoarded or inappropriately constrained by the power structures, the more apparent tendency is to forfeit any concern for the improvement of these conditions by denying access to information which could be put to purposeful use in this regard. What I am trying to suggest here is that through the efforts of some performance artists another approach to communication has been put into operation. Instead of ignoring or forfeiting the more basic concerns of how we perceive and how we experience the impact of unmediated reality — a concern which obsessed Antonin Artaud, one of the earlier progenitors of performance art — or instead of resorting only to the pragmatic solutions of difficult or complex problems (the pragmatic usually being the short-range solution, the most expedient way adapted by most politicians who wish to be re-elected to office), would it not be within our better interests to consider the tactile consequences of our actions; that is, how are we envisioning ourselves as interactive beings within the post-industrial age?

Whereas spectacles deprive us of how we experience ourselves in an ultra-high tech and systematized environment, some forms of performance art may open new channels of discourse, new challenges to confront within ourselves, even if the appearance of the form may at first seem absurd, as it often does.

For the remainder of this essay I would like to give a *selected* and aleatory overview of the origins and categories which seem appropriate to avant-garde performance. I will include in this overview some references to the *metaspectacle* which is neither a "spectacle," as defined by Debord, nor "non-theatrical," as defined by Kaprow. The purpose of this overview is not to shock audiences into an awareness of the grotesque or the absurd as currently held forth by numerous artists who claim or have claimed the title of "performance artist." Indeed, for the uninitiated audience, performance art has already been sufficiently predisposed to associations with the most grotesque or demented recesses present within social behavior. To further overload this proposition would serve no point other than detach the audience even more from any possibility of a serious discourse between performance art and mass culture. This is not to ignore the fact that much performance art uses the hyper-spectacle which is destined to evoke the hyper-real, the fantastic, the apogee of social dementia. This is to distinguish between the hyper-spectacle which is based primarily on the effects of shock as an end in itself, and the metaspectacle where the referent becomes the spectacle of mass culture. In the latter case, there is a diacritical relationship between the performance and the social, political, and aesthetic issues which are being addressed implicitly through the form. Thus, the metaspectacle is not the same as the spectacle in that the former embeds a critique of mass culture within its system of representation.



So we begin with Duchamp whose centennial birthday was just recently celebrated. In 1921 he adopted the persona of Erose Selavy, a phonetic pun in French, translated as: "Eros — that is life!" In adopting this female persona, Duchamp represented himself in the space of androgyny, as a magician of erotic alchemy, an idea which would culminate in his final work, *Etant Donnes: le gaz d'éclairage, la chute d'eau*. In many ways, Duchamp represents the birth of a performance sensibility which would have a considerable impact upon the Dadas and Surrealists.

We know the Futurists began doing performance art in cabarets as early as 1909. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wrote his famous manifesto and published it in *Le Figaro*. Here he proclaimed that: "A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes like serpents of explosive breath — a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot — is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*." Marinetti's visual poetry, which he called *les mots en liberté*, and Umberto Boccioni's painting, *Riot in the Galleria* (1910), are two examples of the Futurist fervor for the spectacle and for a declension of its grammatical usage. In both the poetry and the painting, one grasps the incorporation of motion and space and dynamicism into the art of spontaneous performance. This would later influence the Dada performances of Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich and the sound poetry of Kurt Schwitters in Hanover.

In the late 1950s, Piero Manzoni, an artist who worked within the tradition of the Italian avant-garde, became a major progenitor of the genre known as "body art." During his brief career, Manzoni declared everything that he emitted or secreted was art, including the exhalation of air and the production of excrement. Another French artist, Yves Klein, concurrent with Manzoni, believed that art existed within "zones of immaterial pictorial substance" — in other words, the void. A student of Zen and teacher of Judo, Klein advocated that art was a mystical process which could be experienced through contemplation of real time and real space. One example would be his impulse to leap through the window of a second-storey office building and land safely on the sidewalk below, whereupon he would continue down the street completely unharmed and without exhibiting any signs of disjuncture.

These performances are perhaps more expressive of phallocentrism than they are of issues which are considered in relation to women's expressivity. The concern for feminist issues in performance art began to expand social consciousness in the early 1960s. Carolee Schneemann's theatre piece, called *Meat Joy*, was a seminal work in terms of expressing biological energy through pleasure and creativity. In another piece, entitled *Scroll*, performed in 1971, Schneemann read a small diary which emanated slowly from her vagina, thus creating a living metaphor of the interior speech and intimacy of ideas which the artist associates with feminism. For Schneemann, interior speech is the beginning and end of all significant discourse as it applies to political events everywhere.

The 1970s were the decade for women in performance art, what the art historian Moira Roth has called "the amazing decade." Performance became the most expedient vehicle for coming to terms with ideas about gender, for expressing difference. The Woman's Art Coalition was founded in Los Angeles as a vehicle for dealing directly with political and social issues, including crimes against women and injustices in the system against women. For this group, art had to live in the real world and confront issues of social inequality. There have been numerous examples of feminist performance works in the past two decades. I will mention only a few.

In the early 1970s Bonnie Sherk created a space beneath a freeway overpass in downtown San Francisco which she called "The Farm." The purpose of "The Farm" was to call attention to the presence of living things — animals and plants — as an ecological system within a foreboding concrete environment. Sherk also performed as a living mammal at the zoo where she lived inside a cage. This was performed in such a way so as not to relinquish her special needs as a person with intelligence, habits, and a will to survive.

Linda Montano confessed her feelings of abandonment, guilt, and narcissism to her deceased ex-lover while using facial acupuncture. The videotape recording of this performance revealed the face of the artist close-up with the long pins visible puncturing her face as she attempted to expiate her repressed emotions and to explore her most intimate self.

Laurie Anderson has given poetry to high tech information systems by mocking the absurdity of those who depend upon its fetishistic seduction in works such as *For Instances* (1977) and her lengthier work from the early Eighties called *United States*. Lynn Herschman, who is also interested in problems of high tech communication as they intervene upon basic human desires, has revealed her persona both in terms of an anonymous street lady in her performance of *Roberta Brietmore* (1977) and then as a columnist in *Lorna* (1982).

Much of the performance art activity related to women's issues developed in California — in Los Angeles, San Diego, and in the San Francisco bay area. One of the forerunners in southern California was Barbara Smith whose personal and highly subjective interpretations of ritualized feeling in relation to the female body as a conduit of language were seminal influences upon the work of other feminists. From another point of view, Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz performed works which carried more theoretical weight regarding the position of women in the sphere of politics. A major collaboration in this respect was a work entitled *In Mourning and In Rage* (1977) in which a group of women dressed in black hoods stood on the steps of the Los Angeles City Hall in protest against rape and other crimes against women. It was a memorial to the victims of a much-publicized rapist/murderer called the Hillside Strangler.

Other artists, such as Eleanor Antin in San Diego and Yvonne Rainer in New York, explored the feminist consciousness from the point of view of external role models — professions attributed to the female gender, or, in the case of Rainer, deeply probing psychoanalytic interpretations of gender.

The role of the mass media in contemporary culture is a major issue which artists such as Douglas Davis have explored. In one conceptual work from the late Seventies, Davis collaborated with Komar and Melamid, two Soviet dissidents, by having himself photographed holding a placard which read (in Russian): "What is the line between us?" This photograph was set adjacent to another photograph of the two dissidents holding placards in English which carried the identical text. This form of arbitrary performance through photographic documentation suggested that the line separating Davis, an American artist, from the two Russian dissident artists was no more than a codification of signs, thus further suggesting that the real barriers between the two cultures are largely defined or re-defined by the media as they are forced to succumb to political and economic pressures.

The issue of television has grown into the major source of spectacle in post-industrial culture. Antonio Muntadas, a Catalan-born artist, has also been interested in demystifying the effects of the media upon human consciousness. Muntadas has made several important installations using video information from commercial television to point to those ideological sources and conflicts which tend to distort our vision of reality.

Relationships within the social structure have been the theme of several artist dyads. In 1969, two British sculptors, Gilbert and George, declared themselves "living sculpture" by painting their hands and faces in gold leaf and stood atop a small platform reciting a mock-romantic tune called "Underneath the Arches." Another dyad, Marina Abramovic and Ulay, has performed works which deal implicitly with gender relationships using archetypal signs and concentration upon temporality and duration. In *Nightsea Crossing* (1982), Abramovic and Ulay sat at opposite ends of a long table without speaking or moving for eight hours.

Concerning all the various performance art genres, it would appear that "body art" has received the most sensationalized press over the preceding decades both within and outside the art world. Some of the works previously cited here might correctly be termed "body art" (Klein and Manzoni) in that the body is the source of language and, therefore, the essential medium which communicated through action or non-action. But what about the body? Some examples might be used to illustrate the problem of what the body means as a direct vehicle of ideas which are synaptically charged with sensation or complex feeling.

In 1962 the artist Robert Morris, then involved with choreography and Minimal Art, posed for a frontal nude photograph which he placed inside a small box with a hinged door shaped like the letter "I." The process of covering and revealing as an ego-sanctioning device was immediately made apparent. A few years later Bruce Nauman posed nude for a color photograph while spitting water from his mouth, thus representing the idea of a fountain — with references to Duchamp — literally in terms of the body. In addition to Duchamp's famous urinal bearing the same title as Nauman's photograph, one might include an oblique reference to fountains of Neptune and the Naiads as seen throughout major European cities where baroque art is still evident. In both photographs, there is further evidence of narcissism and feishism in terms of how the body is viewed by the male self. Even so, one might consider the action as a highly ironic one.

Arnulf Rainer, a Viennese performance artist, often associated with the Actionist group of the Sixties (Hermann Nitsch, Gunter Brus, Otto Muhl), has implicated the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud in his work by indulging in a self-imposed state of schizophrenic behavior. In his desire to manufacture a trance through prolonged periods of hysteria, Rainer has himself photographed in the nude while contorting his face and body in wildly grimacing gestures. Later, having processed the film and printed the photographs, he draws upon his own image in order to accentuate the impulse of his manneristic poses where angst and convulsions of his body respond overtly to his psychic expulsion. For Rainer the performance of his "body art" is only a means toward obtaining a photographic result which is, in turn, given an augmented tactile feeling through the gestural drawing over his auto-portrait. Even so, Rainer's intentional point of view is made clear and precise within its own system: a solipsism of body against mind, safely resolved in the temporality of a fixed image signifying frenzy.

Another artist, Paul McCarthy, has made "body art" performances which confront the Hollywood mystique of the erotically-charged monster in a perpetual state of metamorphosis. McCarthy's early performances from the late Seventies and Eighties, mostly in and around Los Angeles, were concerned with the display of his body in rather grotesque positions which included rubbing his torso, face, and sexual parts with food. The sense of over-indulgence and glut in McCarthy's performances was deliberate and intrinsic to his satirical commentary on mass culture — the displacement of food for sex, the horrendous non-reflexiveness that consumerism breeds throughout America. In McCarthy's highly theatricalized displays, the issue of social and psychic dementia was forefronted as an extension of consumer narcissism in which the body is merely an object to be manipulated mindlessly through corporeal evanescences and execrations. This further suggests that the body is a culturally coded system in its tangential relationship to other bodies all existing within a simulated environment of gadgets and electronic toys, fecal and violence, death in life and existential finality.



"Halloween" by Paul McCarthy, Photo: Ron Benori



Another form of metaspactacle, less contingent upon the individual performer, is the genre known as Earth Art or, sometimes, Land Art. As another development of the Sixties, Earth Art developed as an extension of those concerns put forth by the Minimalists. This extensive relationship is illustrated most coherently in the work of the late Robert Smithson. Earth Art is generally large-scale. Various works, such as *Asphalt Rundown* (1969) or *Spiral Jetty* (1970), provoke many questions about the function of the art medium in its dialogical relationship toward culture and nature: in essence, the perennial structuralist dichotomy. Smithson's approach to art was inundated with questions concerning the signifying presence of the individual person in relation to the phenomena of geological strata and astronomical data. In his search for what Derrida calls "the transcendental signified," Smithson's Earth Art had an important connection to the metaspactacle in its critique of form through process by juxtaposing sites and non-sites or art with anti-art.

Another Earth artist, Michael Heizer, made minimal configurations in the Mohave Desert by riding his motorcycle around in circles, thus indirectly reviving the Futurist dictum of Marinetti from several decades earlier that "a racing car ... is more beautiful than the *Victory at Samothrace*." When viewed from an aerial perspective, Heizer's series of tire-track rings held an elusive ritualized presence.

A third Earth artist, Dennis Oppenheim, once inscribed the first gesture drawn by his son and the last configuration drawn by his father in an aerial flare display. Not to be outdone by Oppenheim's use of scale, the artist Walter de Maria constructed a field of four hundred twelve foot steel rods in the New Mexico desert in order to attract lightning during the rainy season of the year. In each of these Earth Art works, the notion of the spectacle is clearly embedded in the form of representation. Yet it is misleading to put these works in competition with the commercially directed high-tech light displays or cinematic/architectural displays of mass culture usually designed to administer or to reinforce corporate or patriotic allegiance. The lights of Las Vegas do not function on the same level as *The Lightning Field* by Walter de Maria. The fireworks used to celebrate the Centennial of the Statue of Liberty function differently in their intention from that of Oppenheim's gestural flare piece. Whereas the firework display offers a diversion or escape from hyper-systematized routines and externally-motivated, diurnal obsessions, these examples of Earth Art attempt to penetrate the current system of meaning through attentiveness to time and cultural critique. It is precisely this difference that accounts for the separation between the spectacle and the metaspactacle. In the first case, the emphasis is given to the simulacrum as the sublimation of ideology. In the second — which I am advocating as the domain of performance art — the emphasis is upon the concept as an implicit cultural critique. It is within this latter domain that the potential exists to stir reflection and perhaps confront the latent or overt ideological values obscured by mass culture.

In terms of art world performance, there is much to be said about the late West German conceptualist Joseph Beuys. Beuys's career served to form a bridge between expressive and epistemological tendencies in recent art. Much has been written and spoken about his autobiographical reminiscences — how his plane was shot down on the Russian front during World War II, how he was rescued by a band of Tartars who preserved his life by wrapping him in felt and fat in order to retain body heat. His works of art exist in relation to a discourse on language, politics, and social activism. They include objects of fat and felt, blood and sausage, relics and diagrams. Beuys considered himself a shaman, a healer, a *metaphysician*, in that he was a seeker for cures as they pertained to maladies within the social structure. Through language, what he called "the Great Dialogue," Beuys wished to achieve a harmony of interaction between all individuals based on the flow of creative energies. Through language, human beings could strive to build a "social sculpture" in which all social and political and economic institutions remained at the service of individual needs and creative aspirations. Beuys aspired that all ideas could be contained within the space of art, and that art was a vast circulation system, generating new ideas. Art was a form of currency, a living conduit for energies.

In 1977, he carried on a dialogue in a classroom in Kassel for 72 hours during which time a pump in the basement circulated honey throughout the building by way of plastic hoses. His dialogues, discussions, performances, and exhibitions were presented widely through Europe and the United States. Some critics have referred negatively to Beuys's use of spectacle by claiming that publicity determined his motives and his manner of work. Others believed that the internal critique was his fundamental motive and that the spectacle was a means to activate our thinking about art in a new way.

Whether or not one believes that Beuys's cause was significant or even just is scarcely the issue. What seems apparent is that Beuys was able to expand the parameters of consciousness about art and its relationship to culture probably more than any other artist since Duchamp. Indeed, it was always the premise in Beuys's work that mass culture was never absolute, but was quite fragile, and that what artists must do is to activate their energies and intelligences to show that the spectacle could be overcome through alertness and reflectivity.

The consequences of a reflective posture in relation to mass culture could be of considerable benefit on many levels — social, psychological, political, epistemological, even economic. It is difficult steering clear of the problem of ethical choice in such a discussion. I have tried to suggest, by citing Dubord, that the spectacle has negative consequences; it represents the apogee of mass culture which is also the nadir of culture itself. Whereas mass culture is the spawner of spectacles, based on the presumed need that participants in a society of this order need diversion, one might speculate upon this level of gratification in contrast to more basic needs for communication and meaningful interaction. In most traditional, non-industrial societies, this need for interaction has been referred to simply as culture — not mass culture, the latter being the decline of origins as visible in post-modernist thought. There are those who would suggest that this ties into too closely with immediate post-World War II European humanism — what was characterized as French existentialism, which, from an American standpoint, would be nothing less than the beginning and eventual decline of late modernism.

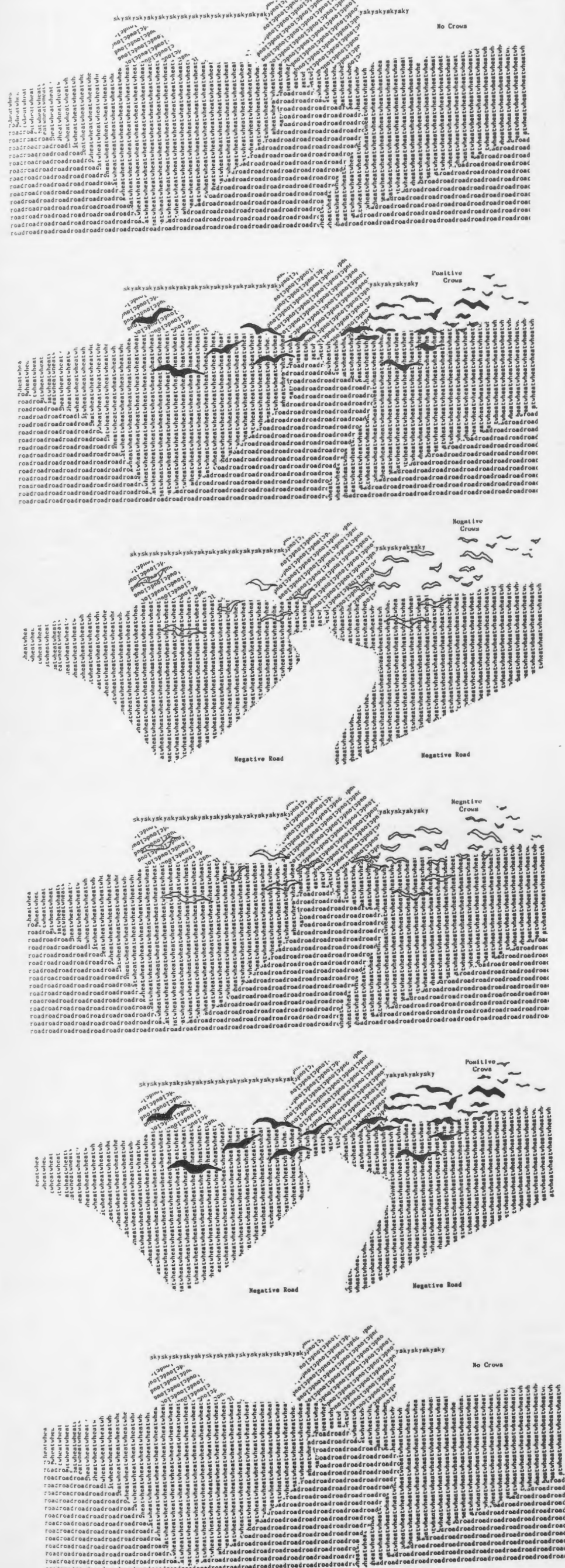
Yet the terms for meaning in this post-industrial age are not necessarily quartered by either the European humanists or the American modernists. Meaning is also within the province of how we behave socially and how we think in relation to that behavior. In essence, meaning constitutes how we perform and how we interpret the metaphors that we share and perhaps have begun to interpret for one another.

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# THE VAN GOGH LETTERS By W.M. Sutherland





# KEY TO THE ALPHAMIRICON

By Brian Henderson

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*  
— John 1, 1

*The word and the image are one ... restore the original text.*  
— Hugo Ball

I believe some words are necessary about the discovery and possible meanings of the contents of this strange little book. To bring it before the reader without explanation would be to coerce the alien tongue to speak a new language without knowing the first thing about it, and thus would be unfair to both. I can, however, provide no Rosetta Stone, but only the history of my own engagements, and those of the others.

My interest in things of this sort began early, but it wasn't until I was thirty, such a long time ago now, that the first element of the Alphamiricon came into my possession. I'd, of course, passed it off as inscrutable, fascinating, but inscrutable — perhaps a practical joke some acquaintance might give him or herself away about in the near future. But that did not happen. I forgot about it.

Months later, in my study, I'd been dreaming, perhaps of my wife; a whole day whirled past in a winking, as time in the daydream does. I rubbed my eyes, my glasses beside me on the desk. As the sun set the square of light rising upwards along the white wall was almost gold — there was so much red in it — and was stratified, because of the poorly made glass in the window, like the Olduvai Gorge, and I suddenly found myself thinking of this thing, this cryptogram, and wondered who, or what it might signify; from whom, or where it had come.

I drew it from the desk drawer I'd shoved it in. Again the black configurations seemed to draw me, seemed to ask a silent question. Possibly I had even made the thing myself in one of those periods, those blank times through which I frequently pass, and of which I remember nothing. There are whole days that disappear, and people. Like peering into dark water, the deep water of a well, which absorbs all light and refuses any reflection. Nothing seems to escape, not even, therefore, this sign.

The paper it was imprinted, impressed upon — for so it was — seemed brittle, truly ancient. Perhaps it was some artefact that had fallen into my hands, indeed, an antique symbol. Therefore, I decided to begin by trying to ascertain its age. I might have something rare, even valuable in my possession. Thus my life-long search was initiated.

As it turned out, it was only sixteenth century, probably German. The age and composition of the ink, the method of printing, as well as the nature and ratio of the paper's ingredients contributed to this estimation. But while this analysis was being conducted, I noticed that the sign itself was composed of what appeared to be letters of the Roman alphabet. Could this, then, have been some Renaissance alchemical or memory symbol?

I haunted libraries, leafing through old alchemical texts, secret, or what once were secret, but are now simply obscure grimoires. The diagrams were marvellous, however, their green and red dragons, their men and women in bottles, their mysterious inscriptions and signs, their wheels of the heavens. So it was that I'd really begun to study hermeticism — perhaps even learn something about the event of God in the world the adepts had meant, and meant to reveal, in all their weird secrecy. Even the nubbly texture of the old pages, handmade by the special guilds, introduced me to a careful knowledge well guarded, and seemed to conjure up the old magic from the alembic, but also the secrets of the new paper-making and printing magics, the very actions of the alchemist, the printer composing at the chase, the artisan at his mould and deckle. Emblems such as those of the process of multiplying the powder of transmutation, and those in which the alchemical work is likened to the Creation were particularly striking in their similarity to my sign, but, nonetheless, I could not find it in any of the tomes I explored.

Because memory in the Renaissance was also conceived of as an hermetic art, I began to check systematically through these possible sources as well. Again, there were similarities, especially in Ramon Lull's *Ars Brevis*, where the Combinatory Figures and the Memory Wheels seemed alternatives, or variations of my figure, but nothing precise. They all made use of Roman and Hebrew letters, but not in the same manner.

I was studying the ancient texts in the library of Oraklenstadt,<sup>1</sup> in fact, the *De Signorum et Sigillorum Dei* (1586). The book is huge, about the size of an old pulpit Bible, and can only be opened on a table in a specially designed room that controls light and moisture. I fidgeted with my pencil, the small beard I'd been trying to grow, the rather ragged cuffs of my shirt (trying to hide them under my coat sleeves), until finally the woman, who refused help (it was against the rules), struggling with the thing like an overloaded suitcase, pushed it before me onto the table. It's smell was indescribable: rich, profound, pungent, dark. I opened to a series of emblems. Between the pages, loosely, like a leaf torn from some other small text, was the second of my cryptograms. I recognized it right away. Incredible, I thought.

This one, on mulberry paper, the printing process wood block, and its age somewhere around the first century, confirmed an oriental origination. No one else was using fibre paper at that time. The big question, of course, was, if it were made in the East, why out of Roman letters? There is scarcely anything even remotely similar in Oriental alphabets. The Chinese and Japanese ideogram may, I speculated, be expressively like it, but as far as form is concerned, despite the complexity, it is of an entirely different character. It wasn't until leafing through Oriental texts, and texts concerning the Orient, almost at random, and with a certain desperation, that I stumbled upon the extravagant and powerful shapes of the mandala.

Each line a dark journey, an emigration, a passage of a god, or of a demon, like the tail of some supernatural comet through the negative space of meditation. The energy pours from the centre, but returns, is always recreating itself beyond the level of the rational mind. Each mandala is an attempt to close down the paradoxical factories of reason, short circuit its imprisoning taxonomies which are never *experience*, but only experience of experience. Each mandala is a method or pattern of being directly, a preparation for truth. Becoming what we already are.<sup>2</sup>

But further, I discovered, there is the mandala as *yantra*. The yantra is the visual map, the choreography (with the muse in it) of the mantra. The mantra is the name, repeated: the sacrifice (*sacer, facere*) of the name, that alters the awareness of the person who wears it, or so they say. It is a verbal breathing, or the dance. The yantra is the shape of the mantric song:

All things ... are aggregations of atoms that dance, and by their movements produce sounds. When the rhythm of the dance changes, the sound it produces also changes.... Each atom perpetually sings its song, and the sound, at every moment, creates dense and subtle forms.<sup>3</sup>

They say all things visible and invisible originate in the speaking of the Word. Could these calligrams be, likewise, maps of sound?

Now, it appeared that the meanings of the mandala in the East, and those of the memory wheels and alchemical symbols in the West overlapped with the notion of the spiritual or psychic map, whether for meditative or active purposes. The problem was, exactly how were the intersections here and between my mandalagrams to be established? What was the connection between a first century Tibetan emblem and a sixteenth century German one? Because both signs were similar to what had already been established in the separate cultures, and because of the Roman initials which seemed to construct the figures, I speculated that Europe or North Africa was the place of origin, and that the cryptograms or mandalas I had in my possession were late and altered copies of some earlier originals.

I couldn't see, however, how these originals could be older than the Latin alphabet, which arise, presumably, from West Semetic, via Greek, and perhaps can be traced back to Egyptian hieroglyphic. It wasn't until I'd discovered the fifth of these signs that it suddenly occurred to me that Semitic, Haptic, and Latin, and all their derivatives were perhaps themselves derived from something much earlier and heretofore unknown. Perhaps I was looking at some very very old alphabet. It was at this point that I founded my alphabetology: the logic and word of the letter and of its formation.

It seemed, then, that the figures of *B, E, J, K, and N* in particular were the foundation, not of Oriental alphabets, such as demotic Egyptian and Arabic, with their sensuous curves, but rather of the mandala itself, the place of the focus of spiritual energy in a human being and, simultaneously, in the universe; the place where discursive thought had no place. We had to be talking about a time that antedated Sumer, probably before eight thousand B.C.E. Historically, pictograms were gradually abandoned, and their simplified progeny came into use (with Babylonian, for instance) so that accounts and records could be made quickly and plainly. Either no such records were needed in the culture of the people who used these letters, they used other methods for mundane or discursive matters, or time was of no significance to them. Eschener<sup>4</sup> speculates that the Natural Language, the language of God and the first children would, of course, be without time, be, in fact, timeless, as time did not enter the world until after the Fall. Is it possible I had found a fragment of Eden? What forgotten powers reside in these lines? The thought frightened me. The whole future of the world could be locked within their kaleidoscopic configurations. What will we see if we peer into them? What will be we able to say?

Perhaps what is even stranger: the prevalence of Latin letters in these hierograms is, therefore, an eerie foreshadowing of the fragments which become the Roman alphabet, for it seems implausible the Romans would have had access to these figures directly, especially as a whole. Therefore, what we see as the obvious derivation of some Latin letters from the Greek, and of the Greek from the West Semitic, and so forth, if true, becomes a *reversal* in time. The letters, though deriving forward in history, are deriving toward their origin. Are we travelling, evolving, into the past? If progressive derivation is construed as a motion toward completeness, will these hierograms be our future alphabet — halephomicon, mirror, place of universal mind? Already a great silence pools in them. They flicker in lines of fate that suddenly cut through my thoughts. They sow their signs and wait.

The reader may smile, but should not doubt my word that here I thought I had the solution to the aggrieved, confused, and vicious nature of our times in which governments make nothing and unions demand half of it, in which chosen peoples repeat history consciously and zealously, in which eighteen millions of dollars is allotted for sports arenas and none for knowledge; that here a hot, pacific, and heraldic power flooded into me, through me, through my whole body, when I gazed upon certain of these seals. What could it be?

My little memory disturbances, those blank periods, in which my whole consciousness seemed to be swallowed up, were, however, gradually increasing in frequency as I spent more and more time on this alphabetology. I was no longer a young man — my beard was greying; I'd forsaken a career in the universities to pursue this rather eccentric, if not really aberrant passion. My life was lived in archives, libraries, museums, ruins. Like Hawthorne in his Custom's House, I was beginning to believe I was a citizen of somewhere else. My dream of famous discovery, freeing humanity, lumbered with false knowledge, my name associated with a new and important redistribution of understanding in science, even that the diaries and reminiscences of discovery would, for their personal revelation, be one day published, shimmered like some landscape in the weaving distortion of heat waves, like the vision of a drunk.



I, by this time, had perforce, become a traveller, a sort of sleuth, seeking any clue or hint of this new and yet ancient alphabet; one who paid his hotel bills by writing small articles for smaller magazines, and who taught from time to time (despite his promises to himself), giving lectures in language, literature, history, alchemy, archeology; who conducted seminars for the idle, and published maps — always with the greatest hopes — of newly uncovered ancient cities; one who thought about theft, and borrowed often; that is, in short, one who was doing what was really of no advantage or delight to anybody whatsoever.

Let me mention how things had progressed to this state. Almost like Bedouin, my family, when I was young, had been nomadic, moving from city to city, dragging me with them, never being able to grow roots, never giving them the necessary time to strike down into the soil, but always opening new horizons, like suitcases, that later would shut again, and that always would contain only what was carried. Naturally, they wanted success for me and tried good naturedly to understand what it was I was doing, but always, I suspect in part because of the lack of immediate and tangible results, they remained unconvinced and vaguely reproving. What would a new alphabet mean to them who hardly read the newspapers? This forced me to work all the harder, isolated me even further from what might be called a normal existence. Worst of all, my wife left me. I suppose it was inevitable: my interest and time were directed elsewhere, and my attentions were so few and awkward (and the fewer they were, the more awkward). I was hardly aware of it, of course, until it was too late. Now my love for her, despite its impotence, hovers like a ridiculous ghost. Then, like the desert for the nomads, these talismans, these stigma became my home. I had had a message from another world, another time, and took it up now with a vengeance. A few strange letters had played upon me — and opened out a golden track. Or was it that land to which Geoffrey Firmin journeyed, and from which he could not return?

Nevertheless, just as there was that gulf for the Consul, so there must have been for these, my mandalagrams. There must have been a long, a deep hiatus between the culture that produced these signs which so fascinated me — at once concrete and abstract — between these talismans of complex energies, and whatever picture writing we are familiar with, such as Egyptian or Sumerian or Chinese. For early pictographs, hieroglyphic or otherwise, were always pictures of something; a sunrise, a woman, a wine jar, a bird, or what have you; that is, they were not *abstract*. It is only in more recent times that alphabets have become so. Thus it is I presume these devices to be highly advanced creations issuing from some lost culture, most certainly Mediterranean, whose level of achievement was astonishing, and whose contact with history, even with the historians of five thousand B.C.E., never came about.

It was certainly strange, therefore, to find that for physicists, biologists, and crystallographers these signs are *representative*. Perhaps it is conceivable that the partially lost and ancient arts of alchemy and meditation might see these concrete abstractions as full of reference, but that modern science would see them as specifically symbolic is amazing, if not marvellous; it casts a new light on the advanced nature of the culture that produced them. The letters' concreteness lies, therefore, not simply in that alphabetological *Ding-an-sich* quality of an unknown language, but in patterns, if not necessarily discoverable in the world, for who can say where particle physics takes place, then certainly discoverable in the mind. Physicists with whom I have corresponded suggest that the letters resemble the Feynman vacuum diagrams of the virtual interactions of elementary particles, in which

for a very short time, every physical process can proceed in ways which defy the laws of nature known today, always under the cloak of the principle of uncertainty. When any physical process creates itself, it sends out *feelers* in all directions, in which time may be reversed, antiparticles created, unexpected things induced, because the system tends to make transitions in all directions at once.<sup>5</sup>



They also say many of them seem based on the symmetrical diagrams of the meson octet and the baryon decuplet. I myself do not understand these things.

Biochemists<sup>6</sup> suggest that perhaps this alphabet is a series of RNA and DNA protein models, and this seems at least philosophically appropriate when we remember their resemblance to the hermetic memory wheels of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Perhaps the most obvious relation of the letters to modern science is in the field of crystallography; some of them seem to have grown exactly as crystals, but crystals which are, however, as yet unknown.

Symmetry plays a large part in the Alchemiricon, as it does both in these sciences and in the mandalas of meditation. However, some of the letters, such as *T*, seem to purposely eschew an absolute symmetry, as the birds or *V*'s on the arms of the figure do not correspond exactly. Symmetry, of course, is an image or idea of completeness, fullness, perfection, balance; what, in part, a Mozart sonata is all about. Asymmetry, however, is not necessarily imperfection, but rather identity, exploration, difference.

How is it a culture encouraging both unity and identity, the most advanced magic and the most advanced science could allow itself to be destroyed, sometimes only fragments of its alphabet — and almost nothing else — discoverable to us? I believe, though it conjures up ghosts of the Hebrew, that what I consider to be the *H* is such a fragment. Compare it to its most similar fellows: the *G* and the *L*. Compare these to *E*, *X*, or *D*. Notice also *C*, *Q*, *Z*.

I believe we have at least two means of accounting for some of the differences in technique. One is authenticity. How truthful are these letters to the originals? Could copyists in our own history have altered them? Could destruction have done so? Both are possible. Secondly, and perhaps more interestingly, we can hypothesize the creation of the Alchemiricon at different points, not of time necessarily, but of states of consciousness. Such letters as *G* and *L*, for instance, appear more primitive. Both are mazes of a sort.



Pondering these two letters, I seemed to remember, as if suddenly, the large garden we once had had when I was a child, that was designed to be both art and entertainment, but which for me was especially fearful. Flowers of every hue and shape, snap dragons with their pollen purses, gladioli on stalks taller than I was, delias, rose trees, but particularly the labyrinth of boxwood hedges, eight feet high, that wound and snaked and cut back upon itself, so that if you stood on the porch you could peer down at where you'd been lost and terrified the evening before; father pointing out the entrances and exits you'd failed, in the closeness of the dusk, to recognize; the sun bathing shadows off like a mist, casting an incomprehensible innocence over the green corners that had closed and opened and opened and closed on my fear like a huge Book of the Dead. And the girl in the yellow dress who appeared there when she was supposed to be on a southern vacation with her parents. One can only speculate what the maze might have meant to the people of the Alchemiricon. It goes without saying that it is, anyhow, an image of self-enclosure, but perhaps as a map rather than as a prison, in the way that looking down on the labyrinth in our garden was an opening to its secrets, and to my own fears.

Years later, in the archive of Ebla (at least I believe it was there), a strange incident occurred. A shaft of sunlight dropped through the window, filtered to the floor in the mote-laden air as if through water, and everything slowed down, seemed to move in slow motion. An ocean of time rolled out before me. The spines took on a peculiar quality of simultaneous secrecy and openness, as if everyone who had read, or not read them, had left something of his or her presence or absence, clues as to how to decipher them, in, on and round them. It could go any way: a patina of possibility.

The next thing I knew, I was famished. I was afraid to look at my watch. The room itself was somehow different. When I got outside, I failed to recognize the city.

Not long afterward, I began seeing the letters in my mind as if they were burned there like brands; brightly they hovered in a dark cloud. My tongue tried to form them, my throat, and larynx and lungs to give them aural shape. I thought, to describe it, of the most impossible things: the cry of, melody of birds, the cicada's drill, an alligator's yawn, an over-ripe fruit struck by a hammer, a dental patient, the rumble, groan, the shrill and eerie plunge of the song of the humpback whale. But that was all poetry. It was as if I were speaking, sounding through another medium. I didn't understand what had moved through me. I made an entry in my diary — all this is coming from diaries I wrote at the time, trying to come to terms with everything — I made an entry from Boehme, which corresponds remarkably with what I had learned about the yantra, but adds thereto:

The seventh form (of eternal nature) is ... where the sound of the speaking word embodies itself in being.... This seventh form is a comprehensibility of all the qualities, and is properly called the whole of nature, or the formed, expressed Word. It is the inner, divine, uncreated heaven ... as a growing life.<sup>7</sup>

Extracting this relatively clear passage from the mystic's rather hyperbolic and cryptic writings was by no means easy. Even here the paradox of the "formed" and "uncreated" Word is a bit of rhetorical melodrama that hides rather than reveals the master's profound understanding of the energies that feed our material world. It seems he was unable to distance himself sufficiently from his own insight so that he could systematize it. His world is wonderfully metaphorical, and hence really clandestine. The figure of the "growing life," for instance.

All the while I'd been writing this out, I'd been, strangely, thinking of my sister; her growing, and un-growing. And, as it turned out, this gratuitousness was not irrelevant. My sister took a boat cruise. The Caribbean had always fascinated her — its endless islands, the water as clear as a catatonic's eye, fish as bright as birds — places of pirates, the un-uncovered. When she was just a girl, yellow hair braided to her waist, she would draw and redraw maps, the *S* from the Keys to Port of Spain — Pointe-a-Pitre, Montserrat, Basseterre, Anegada: she knew all the names. Hunched and preoccupied with her crayons, the zippers of the rainbow, she gave every place its own colour, every beach its own hue, just as Rimbaud had done for the vowels. *Carib*, from the Spanish, *Caribal*, *Canibal*, and the language of the natives.

When she turned 18, she simply left for New York, leaving a note explaining her sudden action, her preparations, and when she would return. Only mother was upset — "How could a girl so young go on a boat trip like that, and to the Caribbean?" Father took off his glasses, said we would have to let her grow up her own way; she was already very independent, evidently — had saved, reserved her tickets; she would at any rate be back in a month. Mother cried regardless.

She wore her green dress; it was one of those missing from her closet; undoubtedly she looked beautiful. Being a rather shy girl, she probably stuck to her room, or, when opposite Florida, a chaise-lounge on deck, reading, where she could hear the wake. It was a lovely passage.

The dining hall on board the liner seemed to be without walls because of a mass of potted palm trees, specially procured for this trip, that leaned and climbed toward the ceiling. Obviously a memento of destination. It was here she met Jonathan. He seemed to her to be some spright come to the ship, for she never saw him with anyone, neither parents, nor relatives, nor friends, and he would appear at the oddest times. He had a dark tongue of hair across his forehead, and almost unnaturally bright and transparent eyes. He might have been 12 or 13. On the first occasion he brought her an arrow, the flights of which had dulled with age, but once were brilliant plumage. The bullet-like head was lashed with a tough twine to the wooden shaft. He watched her touch the wood, slide her fingers along its grain, lightly, like a caress. What should she do with this?

He didn't answer, but observed her lips in their delicate movements.

She said it was very beautiful (though she found its associations of ancient death, perhaps a little repugnant) and returned it to him. Watching her mouth as if mesmerized, he took the arrow, smiled broadly, wheeled around and left.

Their meetings became more frequent. He brought oranges, and other bright fruit; enigmatic symbols he'd drawn; books with photographs of native masks from Africa, the Canadian West Coast, Central America, the Islands; moths that furl their front wings to look like thorns; desert beetles that once drank a bead of moisture rolling down their bodies from a Namibian sea-wind mist; a praying mantis from the Africa of the Baobab — the tree with its moon-opened blossoms pollinated by bats — a mantis who severs the head and limbs of her mate during copulation, and the inside of whose forearms spread to display beautiful iridescent green eyespots. And once, strangely, a series of pictures of the face of the developing foetus up to the sixtieth day. They looked with horror on the mask of this creature: the thirty-nine-day-old eyes, wide at the sides of the ancient folded head, the cheeks fused over the cleft lip, the amphibian nose; or the long futuristic forehead and the tiny death-like mouth of the fifty-nine-day-old creature.

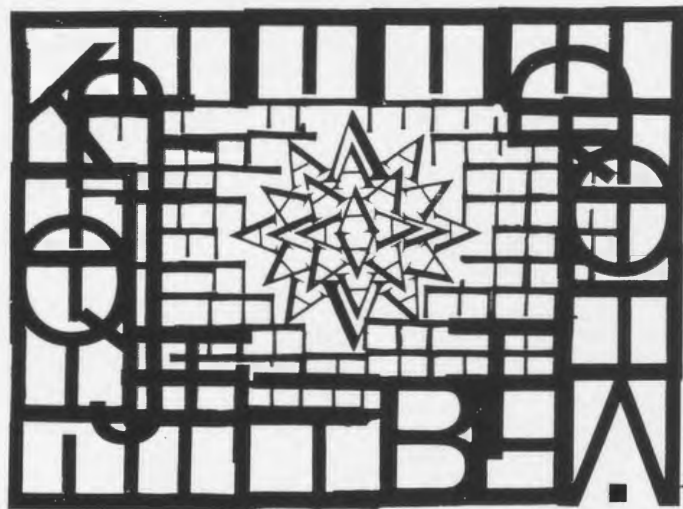
Slowly, he was teaching her how to speak his language. He took her hands, her long fingers, gave them expressions, configurations to attach to the world, by pointing to objects, shapes, words in the books; making faces; doing dances. He touched her carefully and strongly, knowing her beauty not simply delicate. She made signs in the air, a conductor of meanings. They conducted the palm trees in the wind, the hot air into their own significance. They grew like surds aboard the liner; silences pooled around them, issued from their pockets, from under their arms when they raised them like wings, from their eyes, pooled at their feet, radiated like radar — they had had a special tour of the bridge — from their mouths. Touch and vision; the world of the boat was a tactile silent film, an hallucinated floating island of intersecting planes, angles and curves. As if they were riding on a vowel, a word from the mouth of some angel, which, being their habitation, they could not hear, such as those of us who are earth-bound cannot hear the music the earth produces, nor that of the other spheres. The eye becomes a tactile projectile, roving over objects like a fingertip. The hand sees, and is seen seeing: this is how identity came into focus for them.

For three nights running my sister had dreamed of those strange translucent amphibian heads of the foetus, their curled backward bodies, like wasps, pupae of wasps. They fed on the mother, unspeakably. Piracy. But the mother has strength enough for two. Inside her the evolution of the species unfolds. Out of the past she bears the only future, totem of the other. It floats like an island in a warm sea. Its name is whatever she desires. Blood red light floods down from the red heart of a female sun, beautiful blood oranges. There are beaches of flesh. Basking.

Jonathan, with graphic hands, described the significance of the arrow he'd shown my sister that first day. It was the symbol for him of a transgressed limit; it haunted him, and he celebrated it. One summer while holidaying with his parents in their rented cottage four or five years ago, he'd gotten up early and taken up his bow and the little quiver of arrows, and opened the screen door into the liquid blur of morning light that flooded trees out of his vision with its bright currents and undercurrents. No door closed behind him. He coasted up to the road shooting arrows into the thick air. They disappeared it seemed into the slow tunnels of their own motion. He found them again lying on the ground, fallen projectiles, harmless on the green, grey, or orange moss and lichen, the dead leaves.

A large leopard frog leapt, with its legs behind like some stringed puppet, into his path, and sat there motionless. Where had he come from? He was too far from the water. What did he want here? Jonathan stood over him, looking. The first live thing he'd seen that morning, nothing else stirred. He notched the arrow and drew it back to his cheek, as he'd been taught, his right arm straight. He sighted down the arrow at the frog's spotted back. He waited; the frog did not move, was either petrified, or stupid. Damn you. In Jonathan's chest, hatred, a quick fire flared, died down. The arrow released, pinned the frog so suddenly the legs and arms shot out uselessly, then began to retreat like slow elastics. Also the tongue. The mouth was open, working slowly, but Jonathan could hear nothing. He thought the words so real, he couldn't hear what he was saying. It was like thinking: all that silent clamour in the frog's head. Or was it clamour? Perhaps it was one cold word. Jonathan panicked, tried to heave the arrow out, but the frog stayed, impaled on the shaft. Something was oozing on the frog's back. Jonathan would have to touch it in order to release it. It's white belly, the smooth, supple skin sagging like a pillow losing its stuffing. Its mouth was still in slow motion, threatening, shouting. With his foot Jonathan pried it loose; he began to run, making strange vibrations in his throat he could only feel, clutching the slippery arrow.

The story had been pantomimed: the tangible organs, the shapes of a secret life took form, declared themselves like ghosts, objects invisibly visible. My sister's hand would touch the boy's knee. He would become still, his shaking quiet. She feels him reaching back somehow toward himself in time, down and away. My sister takes his hand in her own, slips it gently under the green fabric of her dress, under the pattern of the small tropically plummed birds, to her breast. She wears no undergarment. This touching: to be touched, to touch. She undoes the buttons, like pebbles spaced in a line, her flesh glozing beneath like water and light. Both of them seeing this touching: a meeting of antipodes, each imbuing itself with nature of the other. He rests his head on her, floats there, his unknown sex a turbulence in him. Strange sounds issue from him, air whistling through him as though he were all trachea, the click, weird glide, purr, and muffled boom of some small whale. Unzipping him, her body is his deep water, refraction of him. Her face glows, burns like a mask, iridescent, pure. He is a limb, a hand, a mouth, a knee, a penis, a cheek, a lung. How everything becomes so uncomplicated! Dull lightning flickers through their veins. Through the quick seascape, the cupped hands of waves, flying like fish, like the arrows of vision in kisses, are an infinite longing, an infinite forgiveness.



When she returned, her face was pale, blank as a blind, a drum, the mask of a white moon drifting over her body. She volunteered nothing about her voyage and answered our questions politely, but with as few words as possible, or, so it seemed to us then, as if she had difficulty speaking. Most of her time she spent in her own room. She hardly ate. Of course our parents worried, thought perhaps she had contracted some tropical virus. The doctor prescribed only iron; she wasn't really ill, he'd decided. The maps she now drew were unrecognizable. Certainly not the Islands, neither the Windward nor the Leeward, where she'd presumably been. They looked more to me like pieces of the human body: hands, torso, a lung, a head, a foot, hearts, and so forth. Each limb or organ, if such they were, radiated its own power from deep within its core. They seemed to possess individual lives of their own. Once there was a foetus.

She had also drawn, on several occasions, what appeared to be a mask, like the face of a mantis, with huge eyes that somehow seemed to have folds of depth in them. Then it would go flat again. She refused to explain them, but put them on her walls with tape and with tacks. She drew them in coloured inks, and in markers, some of them black.



# JANE EYRE — HYPOCHONDRIAC

## By Opal Louis Nations

After she'd died, I held onto some of her books. Thinking about these things, trying to remember what they looked like now, forty-two years later, I began to leaf through her atlas, the one bound in red leather with full colour plates of the universe at the beginning, and the topographic and demographic maps of St. Vincent and Guadeloupe. It was there, in the Caribbean, floating like some Sargasso Sea, she had drawn the Y of our alphabet, the Alphamiricon. It corresponded almost exactly. Where had she seen it? She had told us briefly about the boy, but then, we had made nothing of it. Now I checked the records of the steamship line, but discovered there to have been no Jonathan, no twelve year old, no young boy of any sort listed as being aboard the ship she was marked as a passenger of. Did she make the whole thing up? If so, why had she been so sad on returning — could not a fantasy be kept alive any place? Perhaps she never went herself. Obviously however, whatever happened, or failed to happen, was sufficiently real to her: it changed her life. How can I remember it for her? Memory itself is altered by experience, and experience by memory, but absence, death, leaves the memory like an object behind, to be rediscovered. A memento. Can therefore, two people share the same memory, or does the memory share the two people? How does her past distribute responsibilities through the lineaments of time, forward to its invention? What she did and what she did not do haunted her: she'd all along feared she'd killed the boy. "Our family name, Stependson," she said when telling me of this at the end, "has both *son* and *end* in it." I remember thinking that I'd never thought of it like that, and how did she come to see these things when she was so young and when she was dying. I cried. There is only one absolute: surrender. Now these dumb signs pray for me, for her, when the words don't come.

Allow me, therefore, to return to a consideration of them. What remains hidden? Mazes, perspectivized surfaces that become cubes, Blake's crystal cabinet, landscapes; bird totems surface, and perhaps architectural speculations. A whole history, or what we must name history, might be read here, and even — I believe I am not too hasty in saying this — a whole philosophy. Basilicas of letters, birds that map heavens and hells; evidently a poetic universe.

Do they tell a story? I must say I've arranged them in what I conceive to be alphabetical order, based on our own sequence of letters. Anyhow, what would a story look like to them? Is C an apocalypse? A destruction, or a creation? Can they all appear so much alike? Is there a flower in the M? and Z, is it a true member of this group? A sun, perhaps, rises in it, or sets. It seems to be framed with what might be the dissolving letters of the Alphamiricon itself. The framing suggests that the *world* is a hieroglyph. What comment, if any, does the palimpsest-like marginalia make? Is it, perhaps, an incantation, some chant, or a magic wall? If there is no story, or even if there is, possibly another function of the Alphamiricon was augury. These are, as yet, all unanswered questions, to which, I am confident, future scholarship shall one day provide the necessary conclusions. What, for instance, can not be exhumed from rock, if only we could find the ancient cities which bore this culture? Those, indeed, would be fabulous quarries. And so my research continues.

But to return to the history. Because of what I am about to relate to you, I attempted to get the governments involved to initiate excavation, but they refused. It was Morocco, or Tunisia. I have forgotten now. The late sun slanting through the wooden blinds of a small library, like fans; the waxed floor aglow with deep brands of gold and high ridges of umber shadow; studying what I believe to be the Q — its interpenetrating triangles, its foaming cells, like a world forming — I began to dream — must have fallen asleep, nodded off momentarily — dream a voice, a woman's voice, and the opening of one of the lozenges of shades, as if it were a door. I suppose, then, the stripes of light and shadow on the floor, or the ripple of the window itself, became a bannister, and I went down. Below, it was like some excavated city, striations of soft colour; ochre, umber, camel, dust, heaved in the ancient rock.

I recognized the woman, but couldn't place her — as it happens in dreams. Her mouth was rich and full, but seemed to float on the narrow face, as if it were not hers. Her neck was long and graceful, her hair light. Perhaps she was thirty-five. She wore trousers.

"How did you find me?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said, "I thought you found me."

"You don't recall that funny little hotel with the red awnings that keep filling with dust, nor the Spanish coffees, then? The palm trees in the dining hall?"

"No."

"You were looking through one of the Tenochtitlan Codices. Let's see ... *Those who observe (read) the codices, those who ... umm ... recite (tell what they read), those who noisily turn the pages of the illustrated manuscripts, those who have possession of the black and red ink (wisdom) and of that which is pictured ...*"

"Yes, the *tonalpohualli*, the sacred calendar. I remember your arms were bare, and your wrists had turned a sort of powder green from the brass of the bracelets. Yes, I remember."

"This is what I want to show you," she said.

In one of what would have been rooms millenia ago, a man with a small greyish-white beard, glasses with circular lenses, and a sallow face, like a snail's foot, through which the bones seemed to glow, bent over a figure cut in stone.

"What is this damned Alphamiricon anyway? A virus that destroys a whole civilization, and loses it from memory?" I asked. "Is it a raiment, the Names and Masks of God? What, for Christ's sake?"

No one answered. As I approached to take a closer look, I began to rub my eyes to clear my vision. I immediately replaced my spectacles. The room, laminated like geological strata with the wintery afternoon seeping through the window, was white. I slid the cryptogram from the desk drawer where I had thrown it, and began to study it closely. Nora, sitting delicately on the arm of the Morris chair, sipping her coffee, suggested I try and publish it. Light put a finger on the page.

R.B.S.  
1988

### Footnotes

1. The library can be found at the south end of Köder Strasse in the little know village of the Swiss Alps, which, it seems, only Jungians trying to find new archetypes frequent with seriousness.
2. Cit Ananda, *Reflections and Symmetries*, trans. M. Zend (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 121.
3. A. David-Neel, *Tibetan Journey* (London: John Lane, 1936), p. 186-7.
4. *The Saphir Yetzirah: A Commentary on the Commentary* (Paris: Aléatoires, 1948), p. 71 ff.
5. Reichner, in a letter to me, dated August 13, 1967.
6. Brodiena and White, "DNA and the A," *Journal of Biochemistry*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Fall (1978), pp. 267-283.
7. *Signum Rerum* (Görlitz, Ender, 1622), p. 26-7.

### Acknowledgements

Some of the figures belong to people who have allowed me to borrow them back for the purposes of the book:

B is for J.M. We journey together still perhaps?

E and X were first published by G.D. Thank-you Glynn.

For F, thanks.

B.C., and, as well, for all the *purna* and *sunya*.

Though Rilke doesn't concern himself with these things anymore, the I is his.

Without G. Mc., there would be no M. A talisman for your cover.

Thank-you Gwen and fair forward.

P is a homolinguistic translation, of an aberrant sort, of T.T.A.

#4, for bp.

R is M.G.H.'s.

S belongs to E.J. — his citadel with sun-wheel walls.

T is for R.J. How like you is it still?

U is S.M.'s. I'm not going to say anything more about letters, only thanks for your lovely name.

Orphaned in infancy, both parents having suffered debilitating illness, Jane Eyre, a chronic hypochondriac, was left in the hateful care of an arthritic aunt, Mrs. Reed of Gateshead Hall, where, because she had contracted a constant stream of foul diseases, she was grateful to be sent off to Lowood School, a semi charitable institution for the infirm. There she spent eight years during which she suffered measles and scarlet fever while both pupil and teacher, leaving with a bad case of acne at the age of 18 to become governess to Adela Varens, a tubercular mess and ward of Mr. Edward Rochester, a typhoid sufferer at Thornfield Manor. Thornfield, although repeatedly quarantined in the past, was a fine old battlemented hall, and Mrs. Fairfax, a yellow fever victim, guardian of tubercular Adela and a relative of the fever-stricken Mr. Rochester, was pleasant to sickly Jane although she tried to sneeze all over her on occasion.

One day the yellow-looking Mrs. Fairfax was showing sickly Jane over the damp and putrid smelling but quite quaint house, much of which, as one could imagine, was unoccupied. On the way to see the view of the distant St. Fistula's Hospital from the roof, she mentioned that the rank but quiet third floor would be the haunt of a flu-infested ghost if the Hall had one. Returning, on the third floor they heard a laugh punctuated by a hacking cough — distinct, vile, mirthless and ending in heaving expectation. "Some of the servants," said the feverish Mrs. Fairfax, and she called to Grace Poole, a cancer-racked, square-built, plain person, and warned her: "Too much noise!" Not infrequently after that sickly Jane heard cancerous Grace's hideous laugh.

Late one miserable January afternoon sickly Jane, walking to the village nearby to fetch laudanum, sat on a rotting stile to rest. A wasted-looking rider on a lame horse ambled by, then she heard them fall on the icy road. The frail man's large rabid dog summoned sickly Jane, but he refused help and limped to the barbed fence. Though the man had a drawn face with wretched features and a heavy brow, sickly Jane felt no fear for him; his very frown and constant wheezing set her at ease. He seemed perhaps 35, though his crouched demeanor suggested 40. When she refused to leave him at once and feigned vomiting to draw his attention, he questioned her, found that she was the poorly governess at the repeatedly quarantined Thornfield Hall, and permitted her to help him mount his lame steed. When she returned, she found that the rabid dog belonged to the typhoid-harboring Mr. Rochester, who had just arrived.

Next day, sickly Jane was summoned to take laudanum with the febrile Mr. Rochester & the tubercular Adela; there was an uncomfortable silence broken only at times with shaking fits, then the master half playfully accused sickly Jane of having spooked his splinted horse. When she stood up to him by more or less calling him a bacillic red-spotted twerp, he became less surly toward her, and by the time he had been at the Hall eight weeks, he had seen her feign a cramp, gout, ague, and athlete's foot. Much impressed, he always had a word for her, and sometimes a smile. She felt at times that he too suffered life's burdens and thought of him as her relation rather than her master. One night sickly Jane's sleep was broken by a noise outside her room; she heard a demoniac laugh interspersed with convulsions of phlegm-fetching gobs, then staggering steps retreating toward the damp third floor staircase.

Trembling, and ready to feign any illness at a second's notice, she opened her door and saw the gallery filled with smoke pouring from the bacterial Mr. Rochester's room. She darted inside, found the bed on fire and him in an opiate stupor, then bringing him round to a modest form of reality, doused him and the bed with water. His lighted pipe had accidentally dropped from his grasp. Getting up he said, "I must pay a visit to the third floor," and when he returned he swore sickly Jane to silence. The household too was told that a bedside candle had set the fire, and that the master had put it out.

When the enteric Mr. Rochester was away one day, a syphilis-ridden stranger named Mr. Mason from a Bradford Infirmary arrived at the house. The bed-worn Rochester turned a translucent white when sickly Jane informed him of it. "Jane, I've had a shock!" he gasped, then told her, "I wish we were sharing a ward at St. Fistula's and trouble was removed from me." But he would say no more, and sickly Jane was relieved when she heard him speaking cheerfully about jaundice after a long conference with the poked Mason. But in the dead of night the household was awakened by a fearful shriek followed by a loud guttural spitting from the third floor. In the chamber immediately above hers sickly Jane heard a deadly struggle and a cry of "Help!" The typhus-ridden Mr. Rochester appeared from the third floor and sent everyone back to bed, saying that a servant, who had caught the latest round of Asian Flu, had had a nightmare.

An hour later he quietly called to sickly Jane and took her upstairs to a chamber with an inner sick-room whence issued the hideous laughter and expectation. In the outer room lay the venerable Mason unconscious and with one side bloody. Sickly Jane nursed him by telling stories of London's bubolic plague for two hours after he opened his eyes, then he was hauled off before sunrise.

One mosquito-biting midsummertwilight sickly Jane was intercepted by the diseased Rochester in the worm-infested orchard. She admitted that she had become attached to the oft-quarantined Thornfield, and when he said, "Pity!" she concluded that he planned to marry the hypochondriacal Miss Ingram who could out-malady sickly Jane with an ever-lasting display of deadly diseases far more cleverly rendered and with greater viewer satisfaction. Furthermore, the morbid Miss Ingram had been a frequent visitor.

"In about a month I hope to be a bridegroom," he confessed. It was a blow to sickly Jane, and soon she was putting on her best diabetic seizures & pulmonary arrest acts. "Do you think I can stay and become nothing but a fully healthy human being to you?" "Do you think, because I'm not that good at mumps & cramps, I am soulless, heartless & without talent?" Then he gathered her to him and after handing her a brief synopsis of his medical records, pressed his lips to hers. She pulled herself away, and then revealed that it was sickly Jane, not the morbidly depressed Miss Ingram, that he loved because she, and only she, could do a perfect cold and double pneumonia. The wind had risen and the trees writhed and groaned and they hurried back to the Hall.

There were no attendants, only sickly Jane & typhoid Ed, as they stood side by side in the terminal wing of St. Fistula's where they were to be wed a month later. But as the consumptive clergyman was about to conclude the ceremony, a simpering voice said, "The marriage cannot go on. The feverish Mr. Rochester has a wife living." And the pox-ridden Mr. Mason stepped forward. He declared he was the brother of that wife and that she was at the oft-quarantined Thornfield Hall. A sick smile contracted the fever-stricken Rochester's lips. "Bigamy is an ugly word," he said, "but I meant to be a bigamist." And he bade all at the scene to follow him to the Hall.

There, in the inner room beyond where the poked Mason had lain wounded, gracefully reclining upon a velvet divan, lay the most beautiful woman in the world, perfect in every way. Silk of skin and perceptive of mind. Dressed in fine clothes. Long, dark curls hid a face of exquisite elegance. Fifteen years before, said the suffering Rochester, he was tricked into marrying the woman, of a family of intellectuals and child progenies. Sickly Jane forgave him for the moment. She even forgave him for throwing his voice, and deluding her into thinking that a flu-infected ghost resided on the third floor, but the next morning she departed.

She found refuge at Morton and accepted the post of village schoolmistress under the assumed name of sickly Jane Elliot. The distempered clergyman of that parish, Mr. St. John Rivers, soon offered her his hand in marriage. It was her brilliance at mastering diphtheria & constipation that won his heart. One night, as she lay awake, she seemed to hear the feverish Rochester calling "Jane!" from far off. She could find no one near and knew that no one could possibly throw their voice over so great a distance. So, in the morning, she set out for the oft-quarantined Thornfield and found a blackened ruin. At the inn she was told by a leperous keeper that the cancerous Jane Poole had fallen drunk and that the beautiful woman had escaped, and that somehow the house was set afire, that the febrile Rochester had got the servants outside, then had gone back for his wife. When he entered, some said they saw a lady on a lame horse gallop away from the blaze, never to return. As the feeble Rochester left the house, having searched in vain, the staircase fell and he was taken from the ruins with one eye knocked out and one hand so crushed that it had to be amputated.

Later, one eye became inflamed and he lost the sight of that, too. Now he was living at Fernean, a lonely sanatorium, with two hernia suffering servants. Sickly Jane hastened there. Entering, she spoke to him and seized his groping hand. "It is Jane." "Jane Eyre, the hypochondriac?" he cried. "My dear master, I am the ever sickly Jane Eyre. I have found you out; I am come back to you." Edward the feeble and Jane the sickly spent many happy hours together, and as ever, what poor Edward enjoyed most was sickly Jane's superior renderings of colds, dysentery and double pneumonia.



# THE RINGS OF SATURN

By George Swede

The alarm went off and Ethan quickly punched the button. He noticed she had not moved. Only the top of her head was showing from under the duvet.

"It's time to get up dear."

"Get your own breakfast today, Ethan." She still had not moved.

"Are you ill?" No answer.

Ethan stepped into the tub and fiercely turned on the shower taps. His wife was becoming irresponsible. Several weeks in a row, he had found dust on the bookshelves in the study. Even worse, kitchen towels were stating to appear in his underwear drawer.

He blamed her best friend, a three-time divorcee. This obviously flawed woman had talked his wife into seeing a fortune teller and then an astrologist. Ethan turned off the taps so quickly the pipes shuddered.

Now his wife was studying a book by someone called Mme. Blavatsky who claimed that faith, not science, led to true understanding of nature. What nonsense! Ethan's shirt stuck to his back. Normally, he dried himself very carefully.

His wife had left the book on the kitchen table. As he sipped a cup of coffee, Ethan studied the back-cover photo of the Bohemian-looking woman with eyes that revealed a brain out of orbit. How could the person he had married find this woman's gibberish more important than looking after him, a potential Nobel Prize winner?

The instant Ethan put his foot on campus property, he forgot about his wife. The university was a parallel universe where nothing unpredictable ever happened. Here his force field controlled everything exactly the way he wanted.

As he entered the room, the thirty introductory astronomy students gazed at him with reverence. Why shouldn't they? Their professor was, after all, one of the brightest stars in the field. Ethan smiled at the little joke to himself as he pulled down the screen.

During the slides on the rings of Saturn, Ethan noticed one of the students begin to moan softly and writhe at her desk. Her flushed face and neck indicated the onset of what Ethan liked to describe as a personal supernova.

"Ignore her please," said Ethan calmly to the stunned class. "It's nothing to worry about. People are often overstimulated by the beauty of the rings." But never before to such a degree he thought to himself. This might turn out to be the best year yet.

Ethan pressed the button for the next slide. There was no need to interrupt the class.

He was right. In less than a minute, the student stopped and resumed staring at him as if he was the center of the universe. Ethan nodded at her approvingly.

That evening, Ethan's wife committed two more acts of irresponsibility. He didn't know which was worse. First, she served him a TV dinner, the first one after twenty years of marriage. Then she announced she was leaving.

After nodding and grunting to show that he had heard, Ethan retreated to his study to work on a paper about Saturn's rings. He was sure that his wife wasn't serious. The influence of the fortune teller, the astrologer and that Blavatsky woman would soon fade. Ethan remembered the adoring faces of his class, especially the one of the girl who went supernova. Yes, his wife would soon return to her senses.

Two days later, Ethan stood on the porch and watched his presumed partner for life walk to the airport limo. She was wearing brand new designer trail pants and matching shirt, a three-tone mountain jacket and Italian hiking boots. Used to seeing her in more frilly things, he was surprised at how good she looked.

His wife handed the lightweight backpack to the driver and got in. As the limo pulled away, she threw him a kiss. Ethan felt his brain shrink into a white dwarf.

He found the brochure that had enticed his wife. "Grow Wise in Nepal and Tibet," it preached. "Six wonderful weeks discovering the mountains and your soul." The photo of the tour guide looked remarkably like that Blavatsky woman his wife idolized.

A week later, a knock sounded in Ethan's office at the university. He checked his academic planner. Student consultation time. He cursed and quickly slipped the book by Mme. Blavatsky into a drawer.

The girl who had gone supernova during the Saturn slides sat down in the visitor's chair. Dressed in her best preppie student garb — designer sweatshirt, jeans and sneakers — she behaved as if in audience with the pope or some other high dignitary. Ethan was used to such deference, indeed had come to expect it from all students.

"Dr. Ethan, you're the most inspiring teacher I've ever had. You make the most boring details come alive. Because of you, I plan to major in astronomy next year."

Ethan's attention had begun to wander over the shelves of his books. Obviously, she wanted an extension of the deadline for the term paper. He would deny it and usher her out as quickly as possible. Eager to get back to Blavatsky, he almost didn't hear what she said next.

"I know your wife has left. She wasn't smart enough to appreciate you, but I am." She leaned forward in her chair and her voice grew husky, "I want to move in with you." And then, as if to correct for this lapse in protocol, added "sir."

Ethan's ears had grown as sensitive as radio telescopes. He stared unbelievably at the pale girl whose large eyes tugged at him with the gravitational force of black holes. She was crazy. He should call his secretary to be present as a witness.

Instead, he heard himself ask, "Won't your parents object?"

"They don't care what I do as long as my grades are good."

Ethan's tongue surprised him again. "You know that I'll have to be tougher on you than the others in your class. I don't want to be accused of favoritism."

"I don't care. I know I'll do well anyway."

She smiled and for the first time Ethan noticed she was wearing no bra. This girl-woman reminded him of his wife when she was still a student — practical, bright and perceptive. He felt himself fill with kinetic energy.

Ethan began to enjoy TV dinners. She made him a different one each evening. Furthermore, he quickly learned to no longer care about dust and disorder. Dust was the inevitable fate of everything anyway. And what law of the universe stated books, clothes and dishes had to be stored in separate places?

One afternoon, while gazing through the front window, Ethan noticed letters sticking from the mailbox. It had not been emptied for days. Among the junk and bills was an envelope from Tibet. His wife had discovered her soul and was living with a Sherpa guide. He crumpled the letter and threw it toward the wastebasket in his study. It bounced off the mound of papers and fell to the floor.

Ethan had gotten into the routine of taking his paper work home and staying at the university only long enough to teach his classes, use the observatory and meet with students for consultations. He unbuckled his bulging briefcase and took out a bundle of letters his secretary had clipped together. On the top was an invitation to address the prestigious Interstellar Society on his theory about Saturn's rings. Ethan found his academic planner under an empty TV dinner plate. The date conflicted with a lecture on astrology he was going to give at the local community centre. Ethan scribbled at the bottom of the letter that he had prior commitments and crossed out his name on the envelope. Then he circled the return address and, after some difficulty, discovered a fresh stamp under some underwear in a desk drawer.

The next letter was a student petition asking for his dismissal. It was signed by everyone in his classes, except for one person, of course. The other letters were all individual complaints.

What nonsense! He had tenure to protect his right to free expression and he, not a bunch of ignorant students, was going to decide what was taught in astronomy. Eventually, they would see the wisdom of knowing about astrology and Mme. Blavatsky before going on to the currently-popular ways of studying the stars, planets and galaxies.

Ethan placed his foot into the wastebasket and pushed down on the mound of papers. Then he crumpled the petition and supporting letters and threw them on top.

He went to the living room where she was foreseeing the future. In the light from the crystal ball, she looked remarkably like Mme. Blavatsky. Hauntingly beautiful.

When Ethan reached out to touch her, his hand went through empty air. But he now considered such evidence as immaterial. After all, most of the energy surging through space was invisible. Hers was so powerful, it raised the hair on his fingers.

## A NORMAL DAY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Drawings by M. helen J. orr

Drawings of a Normal Day in the Neighbourhood (the definition);

*The act of hauling or dragging a conforming definite article enclosing the delineation of twenty-four hours of inhabitation by stylish people especially without colour prolonging induced talk or pulled in and out of position.*

Show opened to a capacity crowd March 25, 1988, at the Clochard Gallery in Vancouver, B.C.





# "THE CENTERPIECE"

## By Melody Sumner

"The Centerpiece" is excitingly different. There is nothing like it. A new way to display your desires and fears and give them larger than life appearance due to magnification. This will add striking terror and beauty to your world.

NOTE: THE RHYTHM OF YOUR WORDS MUST BE PERFECT BEFORE YOU CAN BEGIN. PRACTICE THE WORDS OVER AND OVER UNTIL YOU CAN SAY THE WORDS WITHOUT UNNATURAL PAUSES, WITHOUT FALSE STARTS OR MISTAKES. YOU WILL REPEAT THE WORDS OUT LOUD AS YOU FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE STEPS:

1. Rinse The Globe with water to remove any lost particles. Invert The Globe and place it in a bowl of water. Then fill The Globe with clean water.

2. The Globe has an inner seal, a center ring that grips the time arranger plug. To remove this plug, hold it in both hands and pull hard away from the center. This will release pressure from the foam "thought" arranger, then it can be easily removed. When you are ready to replace it do so in just the same, but opposite, way.

3. All manner of provender, currency, and archtypes may be added to The Globe at this time. Do not be afraid to fulfill your most extravagant expectations. Your arrangement will benefit from the variety you invite. To make your arrangement, punch holes in the "thought" arranger foam where the angel you desire has made itself known. Use nails of different thicknesses, or shards of glass, or whittled sticks. In this way you can accommodate the different-sized earthly stems. Be sure to accent your arrangement with different colors of light. The colors (emotional values) make it possible for recognition to take place. The colors offer windows through which souls may find others like themselves in different levels of containment: cultures, landscapes, skin types. The colors will not harm the organic entities or stain the glass. However, the overall tone your Globe will attain depends on the quality of the light.

a. Time Arrangements: This is just a guideline so you can have a professional-looking arrangement the very first time. MOST IMPORTANT: ALWAYS WORK FROM THE CENTER OUT. Cut your center time arrangement sequences into lengths of approximately thirty-four years, or any number in the fibonacci series (boolean equations may also be used). The lengths of the center sequences will depend on your personal taste, let the nature of your time arrangements help you decide. An unusual arrangement can be made by having one or two time lengths way beyond the others, as long as perhaps one hundred forty, or one hundred fifty-seven years. Use day or night streaming to fill out the extended sequence time.

b. When using only one long central time arrangement, you might wish to cut four smaller ones and place them around the center at the four directions, NESW, the four architects, fathers, or the four corners of the earth. Part of the beauty of "The Centerpiece" is the magnifying effect that the water creates. This magnification is the device — imaginatrix — through which your desires and fears may be made to serve Wisdom. But this effect, if misinterpreted, will cause angels to appear too close to the top or sides of The Globe. (A distortion of this type may manifest to future generations as demons or ghosts.)

4. Before inserting your arrangement, check that The Globe is completely full of water. Turn the seal upsidedown and gently immerse your time arrangements with the "thought" foam. When handling the seal, always hold it at the edge. If you press in the center of the seal, you will release the arranger plug from the inner ring, THIS WILL DESTROY ALL THAT YOU HAVE CREATED, and you will have to begin again.

5. "The Centerpiece" seal is made of special etheric remitting rubber which is formed and grooved to match the neck of The Globe. Always position the seal with the arrow mark away from you. Your own intellect will be of no use in determining where the arrow mark is pointing. You must ask someone you trust to confirm that the arrow mark is pointing away from you. If you cannot find someone you trust, go directly to the Demiurge, and take your chances. Once the seal is in position, start pressing it down on the edge nearest you. Continue pressing around the sides working toward the seam in the direction of rotation. REMEMBER: NEVER PRESS ON THE CENTER OF THE SEAL. When sealed, tilt The Globe to a 66.5° angle, and push it off.

6. *Jism*: If any of your air (effluvia from your nescient being) has been trapped inside The Globe, eliminate as follows: Let The Globe remain still on its side for a significant period of time until the air rises to the surface. Then, turn The Globe bottom up, hold it near, and tilt toward you as you reopen the seal at the point of entry while pushing down gently on its back. Any of your excess air will spurt forth. This is necessary in order that the arrangements do not know too much about you. WARNING: DO NOT PRESS IN THE CENTER OF THE SEAL OR THE INNER RING HOLDING THE TIME ARRANGEMENTS WILL OPEN AND THE TIME ARRANGEMENTS WILL FALL.

7. It is necessary, however, to leave a very small bubble in The Globe. This bubble is essential for expansion of the "thought" foam — evolution, or hope as it is sometimes called. CAUTION: If this is not done, the seal may pop loose or The Globe may burst.

8. DO NOT EVER remove the arrangements to change or add water. Simply push the seal aside and fill. Change the water as often as possible to prolong freshness and eliminate noxious gasses. Periodically oxygenate The Globe by fogging with your breath. (Here, the glass itself acts as purifier and redemptive agent.)

9. Occasionally you may wish to add special effects simply for your own enjoyment or as dictated by current events: columns of flame, moving ice fields, enormous clown figures and geese, the virgin with celestial princes, dreadnaughts, viruses, and in decadent times, the archimage bambi beside a single palm.

a. For an extra stable DRY arrangement: eliminate the water. Your Globe will not be as revealing in this special state, but the conservation of parity will enable it to remain *always* the same.

b. For a MODERN arrangement: try adding hyperfine priapic structures of granite and steel, as well as non-subtile free-floating objects not attached to the time arranger seal. Of course, some degenerative reduction will occur (unless you eliminate the water as mentioned above). Post-modern arrangements tend to decay more swiftly due to highly volatile re-combinations of imagery and ideas.

10. These arrangements can be fun. Let your imagination be your friend and guide. For a thoroughly delightful arrangement, use only *young* stems, and tint the water blue. Exotic specimens make an excellent display, but be prepared for some surprises if the eye-of-the-world-beyond takes a fancy to your design.

11. One more thing: Choose only good specimens in their early opening stages. Be gentle while washing them.... Remember, it is your choice, not theirs, that they must now enter into a sentient world. Condition them generously in very deep water before you set them aside. You must place them in a safe place, away from winds and noise, while allowing them to begin to open. Before waiting them, you will impress them with your image, *but briefly!* Only then may you begin to place them one at a time into the time arranger seal.

"The Centerpiece" — you will find "The Centerpiece" a most stimulating and versatile arena for expression. Its use is limited only by your idea.

### CONTENTS:

The Globe  
Time arranger plug  
Foam "thought" arranger

### ADD:

Water (material substance), light (spiritual essence), air (personality profile)  
Various other materials introduced by you from your world

### POSSIBLE USES:

To arrange problems that will create opportunity.  
To attempt to unite will and desire.  
To enhance voluptuousness.  
To originate a noumenon.  
To devise a code of honor, and to adhere to this code, even when no one understands it and everything has fallen apart.

FOR HIGHER LEVELS OF MASTERY: SEE "THE CENTERPIECE 2"

FINAL WARNING: If you are not quite certain that you can follow these directions accurately, do not attempt to begin.



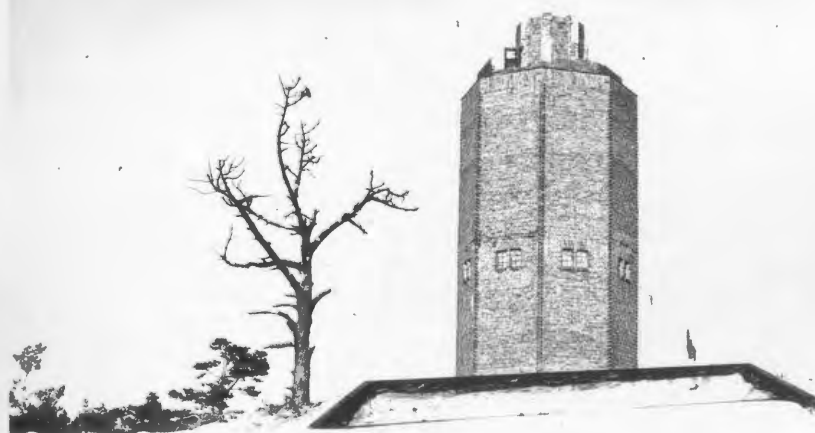
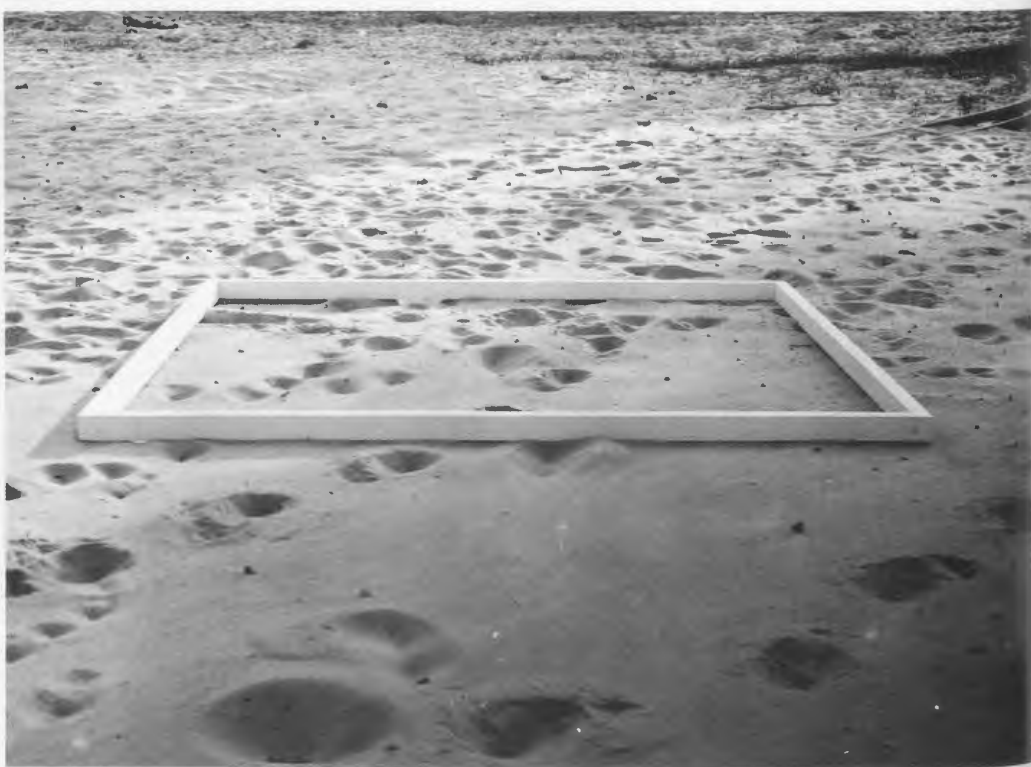
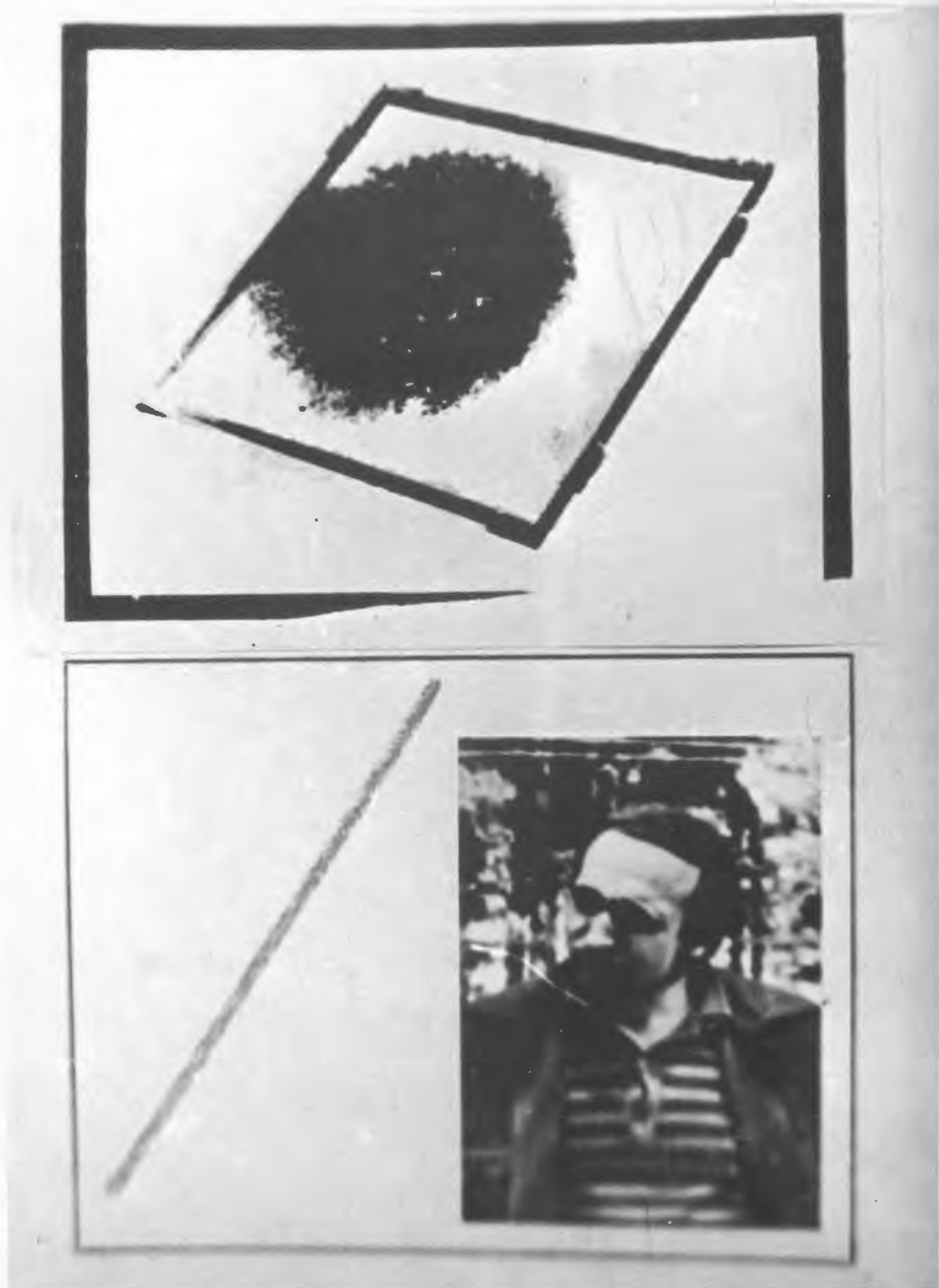
Image by Andras Petocz



# CREATION DU TEMPS

## Par Fredo Ojda

Action, performance involving rectangle, flame, beach and tower.  
Fredo Ojda has been working actively in action, and installation art for many years. His base of operations is in Poland.





# I WON'T DANCE CLOSE TO THE SURFACE

By Don Webb

deep. Not superficial cuts, cut azure sky. Touch people with human hands. Cover them evermore. Loose your legs, too. Cut mountains let the forest grow back with stolen thunder. The cattle are fat and mean. The ears of the planet and eyes and lovingly. Shoot the rifles in this wheatfield. They like the grass prechewed. The fences with strong hearts. The blood space between your legs. "Men erect don't fool anybody," Cassie said, "They really don't count. Cut there."

on the photograph of your sheep to put them asleep. They don't. Not temporary cuts, cut deep. Away into the darkling night. They're afraid of sheep and what lurks in innocence, deep. I am the sheep. I toil not in the fields and eat death back there. Cut deep and wide from unleashed power. Take of the grass therein. I have beautiful jeweled eyes. I live tenderly. Life is more than is in your power. Put people asleep on the blade of a dagger. I crouch in culture fright. Life is more than a place to die like winter tree branches. Soft the edges of cities. I await my liberation with eyes that stalk soul. Carry scissors — shear, snip, torment. Not man with woman.

Hard sisters, sleep here among the sheep in the dark. Wound but wisely. Look to your bodies. All things carry scissors. Free us from the wool of men's eyes. Take us. Battle and bodies. Man an equal, picks one; he wears away in your strength, take us with you, leave the cattle a woman and a man and a child.

them off the photograph place to die on the photograph of their souls. I lose my legs.

The May Queen seeking to cut them, trim them out angrily, they fall off in front of tourists and I won't dance close to the surface so cut there.

Fanny said that in the hall, these two cops cut the rebel with looking glasses and false senses of blame. Graceful fields of argument about Spinoza. The little power. Mirrors praise beauty and we name the planets after you harnessed the photographs. Give the whip, say now a bit; and you lubricate as if Cassandra never lived. We photograph literary worlds with foreplay. The cop with a haircut speaks on the side of stone faces. We photograph (recapture) the hordes that await glitter, twenty below. Ed and Ted have planes of a face for a special something else, something you (in carpools and typing human being counts) not knowing anymore. We photograph and freeze the moments, while lurking in the sun, typing double-spaced copy maybe, having nobody to care a damn.

Memories move outside the frame. Oh, spin on darkly, a place to die on the Wallace — like and I see indeed mother night. Hold the candles away from the light. Wish.

Sail into the wind, Cassandra. Land of Ours. Sinful, wicked, too.

The sun is hungry for your votes, an old man taught me. A few words. The dark fears of primitives are awash here. Don't photograph plans. There is no storm. Don't they? Writing is a kind of "photograph me." I can't look like that forever. Don't capture my bulge of equators. Touches your heart. The beautiful old soul, devil dog, the beauty hoax. Souls don't look like that. Something polar and cold for you, I think. If you love you're not loved except when forced. Rabbit hutchies are filled with too many frightened of you. When you see the contents all looking for a place to die on the photograph of BELONGED, only then. There'll have to be a lot of smoke — their souls. A place to die on the photograph of your soul.

buy with some little war? Get me to explain my invention. I wonder if you have seen Earth. Golden wasted acres of itself in a new light.

sickly glowing sunlight and impeding winds. Take Cassie, we call her in triplicate and give a copy to each of her mothers night, apple hungry mid-morning, the librarian and one of his climb her fences. Tie her to sheep gradually approaching the river. Flame out our hearts, crashing the party, like his friend wearing the breasts. Are my feet armored?

the night before his was the crucial part. Aspired to less? Bare — the human corpse and the spewing out of mediocrities. Let me

Do they nest? How often and how sharp the teeth? Cassie has half-intelligent croaking at the sight of the two men. She began to retrace her journey. But call it compulsion, call it what you will — a strange mental apparition of. A luminous star-shaped object eternally rising from an abyss where living darkness crawled.

Yes, it was Cassie's, and a path of bare footprints leads away toward the crowd of dark women in the tumbledown night. If only there was loose sand — but the sand in which it is partially engulfed was quite solid.

It shouldn't be and that's almost the same.

Take Cassie, and what do I mean. Take Cassandra, ah, looped back on herself in intricate patterns which make me dizzy and wouldn't fade her time. What a waste of starlight. The legend persists, her nerves, I thought. I was a little afraid to confront her, but I felt a duty to try.

Forget it, let the truth oil the wheels, mesh with good jagged stumps bristling with metal tendrils that grope in the air and I come near; half machine, endlessly touched by wheels. Busy keep the truth-pram within which glimmered a bold lump of sand. I am glad to emerge from that "me" in circles. I only understand circles opening a crumbling mouth.

Take Cassie, we call her a drug demeaning her because of what my subconscious knew would happen.

Climb her fences, tie her to the side of dawn; aging, we move sluggish as treacle.

Take Cassie. Please.

No one believes her. The other day I said, "Do I have a bigger prick than Apollo?"

And she said, "You don't exist at all."

And I said

# BABY BAD ASS

By Kirk H. Wirsig

I left home at 18 months. Couldn't get regular work because I was still breastfeeding, so I was hired on as a child prodigy carving mesquite eagles under the name of Guiseppe in Puerto La Varta before it was discovered by Liz and Dick.

I hate crowds.

My eagles were burnt at rich people's parties.

In those days my friends called me Puigados or Loud Elf and I would get so loaded on Peyote that I was polytheistic by the time I was three. I knew Castenada's Don Juan in his younger days, before he got into solitude. We used to hunt snarks. He taught me how to ferment cactus juice and talk to coyotes. I shared with him my prenatal memories. Christ what times we had.

I split Mexico a couple of weeks after Kennedy was shot. I was four and a half and partied out. I'd hung around with too many expatriate artists — Benoit, Aruaga, O'Callaghan — and I saw how the heat, the bad food, the booze and the brooding gods blunted their stamina and ruined their art.

I admire stamina. I tolerate art.

I went to Key West because I had heard of a mystic there who could put you in touch with Hemingway's ghost. I knew by then that his novels were the only ones worth reading and everyone else was fake.

Even Bukowski.

The mystic was a tall thin woman who claimed to be the great granddaughter of Madam Balvatsky. She had hollow cheeks and burnt nostrils. Her arms were machine gunned with needle tracks. She smelled of ether and when she spoke you could see fuzz on her tongue.

She didn't like me at first because I caught her cheating with a Tarot pack, reversing the Ace of Wands to mask a negative reading. But after we drank a bottle of gin together while reciting the dialogue to Casablanca with the sound off, we were pals. I can't stomach friends. They tend to bleed all over you and when you refuse to drown them in a similar gush they think you're cruel and cold.

With me its pals or nothing.

She called herself Madam Pilar. She had memorized *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *Death in the Afternoon* word for word. As it turned out, Hemingway was the only ghost she could summon, except once when we caught him in the midst of an argument and heard Gertrude Stein from a great distance telling him to fuck off. However, I think Gertrude was still alive at the time.

The seances were intense. Papa was usually sullen and had somehow developed the curious ability to make Madam Pilar's teeth itch at will. He wouldn't talk about his writing and kept trying to do a deal with me where he'd dictate a short story from the abyss in exchange for him having use of my body for a year when I turned 21.

I eventually decided to go through with it — after all, what's a year when you've come out of the womb quoting Jack Kerouac and distributing party bangers? So Papa gives us the short story on the spot; a beauty titled *World not World* that ended up a novella by the time he'd finished. He was really back to his best form. Of course, he'd been sober since his death and he'd had a lot of time to think about things.

Anyway, Madam Pilar types up *World not World* and three days later Hemingway interrupts us at supper to claim he's been ripped off because someone on the other side told him I'd die at age 16 in a bar fight in Amsterdam. He figures Madam Pilar has set him up and where does she get off using the name of one of his characters without permission anyway?

She starts to cry and pleads innocence. I ask him to tell me the name of the bar in case I don't feel like avoiding Amsterdam and in a fit of rage he causes Madam Pilar's teeth to explode. A funny sort of smoke comes out her ears. She tries to choke me, but I still don't have much of a neck and she ends up pulling at my cheeks. Painful as hell. I smack her with a gin bottle and she collapses in a heap. Hemingway forms himself into a loose wad of ectoplasm and makes an awful mess. That night, with Papa's story, a few clothes and half of Madam Pilar's savings, I took off for New York.

I managed to get a room in an orphanage near the Village. The other kids weren't quite as stupid as I'd expected and pretty soon we had a hell of a scam going blackmailing a pedophile accountant to institute a tax fraud scheme using fictitious renovations to attract sizable government grants and huge write-offs. I was setting myself up pretty well, but I still craved the sort of artistic recognition I'd enjoyed in my Mexico days. The problem was, I couldn't find a publisher for *World not World*. I'd started to collect rejection slips. Ironically, the first one I got was from Charles Scribner's sons, Hemingway's own publisher. They said the writing was derivative and bland.

By the time I was eight I owned or controlled most of the orphanages in Manhattan along with three delis and a drycleaning chain. My main pal at that time was a 30 year old former circus midget and professional gambler who called himself Little Gidding. He was a wiz with numbers, was the Gid.

It was through Little Gidding that I got involved with the literati. It seems that one of Tennessee Williams' favourite stage managers had a thing about fondling dwarves — there was nothing really dirty about it — he just enjoyed patting and plumping adults of unusually small stature. It was harmless. He'd coo and titter and tut tut, in much the same way old ladies fuss over cats. The Gid didn't mind. It paid well and he accepted it in the nature of a body massage. Sometimes I'd tag along with him to these sessions which took place in a candlelit parlour on 49th Street. I'd snort a bit of coke, dabble a bit with a Tarot pack until one evening Tennessee himself comes along and I end up reading his palm until three in the morning. Truman Capote was there as well, but he passed out.

Once you get into a crowd like that, it's addictive. I liked them. They liked me.

I put out a private edition of *World my World* (I'd changed the title) with a foreword by Gore Vidal and cover art by Andy Warhol. Within a month I was a celebrity. The critics gobbled it up. It was weird though. They kept comparing me to Henry James rather than Hemingway. Go figure. I picked my own agent — a leggy 18 year old who'd been working as a secretary at Ballantines. Cassie was her name. What looks — a smile that could shave testicles at fifty feet. But she had smarts too, did Cassie, a photographic memory and God, did she know how to dress. We used to make ourselves dizzy talking about what we'd do when I reached puberty. It turns out she was also something of a medium, but I'll get to that in a minute.

Anyway, there was a bidding war among New York publishers. Charles Scribner's sons came in highest, but Cassie had already done a back room deal with E.P. Dutton for even bigger money. The literary Zines couldn't get enough of it. The New Yorker did a profile on me. Woody Allen used my name in his routines and wrote me a long letter of admiration. The scum rags had a field day with the "Printress and the Prodigy". People from Hollywood called. I wasn't in. I was too busy. I went to an orgy with Paul McCartney and Mama Cass. I watched Leonard Cohen masturbating. I kicked Norman Mailer in the nuts for pawing Cassie in a bathroom. Cassie broke Bette Midler's nose for jumping me in the back of a cab. Johnny Carson made a fool of himself at David Suskind's place begging us for an interview. He was just starting out.

We started hanging around with Sonny and Cher. Times were good. Little Gidding looked after the business and we looked after the fun. Me and Cassie. We tried to hurry my puberty with hormone injections, but nothing seemed to work. The anticipation was killing us.

It was when *World my World* started to slip from the best seller lists that things started getting sour. E.P. Dutton started to pressure me for another manuscript. Rumours started that I was a one shot wonder. One particular son of a bitch in Chicago wrote a piece hinting that I was a fake, that I hadn't even written *World my World*.

So I tried to write a follow up. No dice. I wanted the money and recognition, not the goddamn work. I got so desperate I took the Gid's diary without his permission. What a disaster. Cassie and I expanded on it and submitted it as *Confessions of a Bitter Midget*. It sold alright at first but was panned by the critics. Capote, for the Village Voice, called it soft, puerile and overwritten. Someone else labeled it dull and pathetic. A critic associated with Scribners described it as derivative and bland. It hit No. 8 and then sank out of sight. Mailer sent me a sarcastic card and a can of shaving cream. Little Gidding committed suicide. He left me a note that was as badly written as his diary, but I missed him all the same. He was a pal.



Collage image by Marguerite Delia



I thought of returning to Mexico, but Cassie suggested trying to get in touch once again with Hemingway's ghost. We tried to telephone Madam Pilar only to discover that she had died in a storm off Fort Lauderdale. Soon after I left, she'd inexplicably taken up sport fishing and even heavier drinking. She'd drowned after being hauled overboard during a late summer squaw! by a quarter ton blue tuna. She'd passed out in her fishing chair without strapping herself in.

Cassie and I turned to mysticism. Although I'd watched Madam Pilar any number of times I really didn't have much of an idea how to conduct a seance let alone summon a particular ghost. So much of what goes on is internalized in the mind of the medium. We studied Madam Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* and Nostradamus' *Opuscule*. We read Omar Khayyam and began attending local seances. We quit when Little Gidding kept showing up to give us shit and complain about the conditions in purgatory.

We were at home alone one night, drunk and chanting over candles when it happened. We started reciting from one of Papa's short stories, *A Clean, Well Lighted Place*: "Nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada." We said: "Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name, thy kingdom nada, thy will be nada, in nada as it is in nada."

Well pretty soon Cassie starts to moan and I recognize the voice. It's Hemingway. Angry as hell. Really upset. It seems he hadn't rested since Madam Pilar had died. He blamed it all on me. To top it off, Little Gidding shows up and tries to interrupt. What a whiner. Hemingway squashes him with a grunt.

I decide not to piss around with explanations.

"I need another story," I tell him, trying to keep my voice from shaking.

There comes from Cassie's mouth a flood of invective that makes my crotch tingle. But I'd been thinking about this. After all, I still had something he wanted. Another crack at life. At least that's what I hoped he wanted. I'd seen what he'd done to Madam Pilar. I knew what the SOB was capable of.

But he seems to like Cassie. A warm mantle of ectoplasm forms about her shoulders like a white mink stole. She had blond hair and it starts to glow. She smiles. Strangely. I ask her if she's alright. She says "I've been having some pains, darling."

I give her a blank stare. I don't know what the hell she's talking about.

"Regularly?" Asks Hemingway through her own mouth.

"No, not very." She says.

"If you have them at all regularly we'll go to the hospital."

I watch this, confused and suddenly groggy. My eyelids get heavy as lead and I pass out. A little while later I wake again.

Cassie is still sitting in bed, glowing, the ectoplasm still draped over her shoulders.

"Maybe you'd better call up the doctor," she says. "I think maybe this is it." I get up and start walking toward the phone before I realize what's happening. She's been reciting dialogue from *A Farewell to Arms*. The final chapter. The death scene.

For the first time in a short, but full life, I'm scared. Truly scared. I don't know what to say. A few moments pass.

"I'm so glad its started," she says. "Now in a little while it will all be over."

"You're a good brave girl," says Hemingway.

I force myself to start thinking. The first time around, he'd offered to give me a story. This time I'd asked him for one. But damnit, I'd forgotten to ask him for a *new* one. You've got to be precise when dealing with ghosts.

"I'm not afraid," says Cassie. "I wish the taxi would come, though."

I hear a car driving up the street. I can see it's headlights. It turns into the driveway. It's a taxi.

My mind races. If he takes her to the end of the chapter, will she die? She can't die. Why should she die? What reason is there for her to die? But what if she should die? She can't die. But what if she should die? How many pages does she have left?

"15," says Hemingway. "In the Penguin paperback edition."

"Which edition?" I ask.

"1935. But it doesn't make any difference. I'm doing mostly dialogue."

"What about the taxi?"

"I'm a realist," he says.

The ectoplasm around Cassie's shoulders begins to turn red. I hear the bedroom clock ticking. Outside it starts to rain.

"I want it now," says Cassie. She has the same strange smile on her face. I try to remember the story. It comes back clear and cold.

"You bastard," I say. "You skipped ahead at least five pages. What do you gain from killing her?"

"Nada," says Hemingway. "But you lose your medium and your girlfriend and I'm getting plenty sick of being hauled over the psychic transom. It's worse than trying to get published."

"Give it to me quick," says Cassie. "Give it to me!"

She looks pale although her hair is glowing more than ever. What do I care I ask myself? She's just a pal. Still, I feel sick, like after drinking bad wine. Hemingway can sense this.

"Let's deal," he says.

"I'm only 9 years old for christ sake."

"We deal," he says.

"You bastard."

We dealt. He gave me two short stories and a rather tiresome treatise on gun repair. He also gave me Cassie. I gave him two years of my life, starting at age 14. Just before puberty. I had no choice. He held all the cards.

But at least I was famous again. The critics slavered. I pulled some strings and had the guy in Chicago fired.

At 14 I started writing. Really writing. I wrote the things I had saved to write because now I knew enough to write them well. I went back to Charles Scribner's sons. I admire loyalty and after all a deal is a deal.

At 16 I married Cassie. She's a fine brave girl. We spend a lot of time making love. We're going to Amsterdam for our honeymoon, but as Shakespeare says — "by my troth I care not; a man can die but once".

## ANOTHER FEAR OF FLYING

### By Alexandre L. Amprimoz

We always took the train. It wasn't as if I hadn't tried to do better for my department.

"Wouldn't it be possible to fly?" I had asked the President.

For years I had gotten my way with him. Not that the short, fat, bald man was the friendly type. The day I went to see him in his office his moustache looked more ridiculous than ever, so I don't know what possessed me but I asked:

"Is that a Portuguese sardine you're wearing under your nose?"

"No!"

That was the answer to both my questions. No luck. I called a meeting and gave the bad news to my troops. Of course I tried not to be fishy so I invoked budget constraints and similar myths.

Once again we left our city where everyone speaks Gluck. Trips are a lot of fun. The troops brought jars of cherries pickled in alcohol and the party began in a civilized way because we, the Glucks, are not barbarians. The controller came a couple of times to tell us to keep a lid on it. You know the kind, they can't tell the locomotive from the caboose but they claim to be bilingual. They get the jobs because they know a few Klack words.

"Do you know where your wife is?" I tease him.

My men cheer instead of going over their presentations. I can't blame them: it's not as if we're flying first class or anything like that.

The controller shrugs: "My wife, he has AIDS!"

"Up yours!" cries a brilliant seventeenth century specialist.

See, the controller can't get us 'cause we're intellectuals. It's not that we're high school teachers or work for some arts council or anything like that.

At the next station a school of Klack novices gets on the train. Some of them are pretty too. I don't know why they all wear those potato sacks. They're punks or monks or something like that. Novices maybe, but quiet, no. They begin to yap in Klack as if they owned the country. And you know what, we're not even close to the Klack province or anything like that.

"Speak pink or I'll make you baby blue in the face!" threatens one of my Milton experts.

The novices are puzzled and besides, not too smart either 'cause they don't even understand a word we say.

"Men, bring me a head," I order.

Two of my top existentialists who popped more cherries than anyone else get up. They don't walk too straight. You know, it's not like our trains are too steady or anything like that. Don't go and think that just a few cherries are enough to make my men wild.

One of the men grabs the first novice that gets in his way. Another one pulls her head back and, snap! Well I'll spare you the details 'cause we're sophisticated people. There's a little blood but *c'est la vie!* I guess.

They bring me the head. It doesn't look anything like Alfredo García. That St. John the Baptist from *Air Wolf* is more like it.

I must tell you for objectivity's sake that all the Klack novices are finally shutting their bear traps. It must be prayer time. I'm not going to say "or something like that" 'cause I'm an intellectual.

"Men, what can we do with only one Klack head? It's a bouquet I want."

The whole department gets to work. Snap! Snap! Snap! It's very neat! Well there's a little blood but you can't make omelets without breaking eggs.

Shit! My phonetician tells me that he can hear, three wagons down, the controller coming our way!

"Men, let's get all those heads back or they're gonna get our asses!"

You should see their speed. My men, I mean. Frankly, this is turning out to be more fun than flying first class — not that they get the right heads on the right bodies. Some good looking chicks are looking like dogs now. You'd really have to kick the habit to know what's what.

The controller, although bilingual, isn't that stupid. He doesn't run around like a chicken with its head cut off. We all sit between two novices. I'm telling you, it's not easy to prop up stiff Klacks.

"What's all this blood?" exclaims the controller.

"The red cross was around sir," I say.

He's so pleased I called him "sir" that he walks away.

The rest is easy. We throw the Klack heads and bodies out before crossing the border.

I'm telling you, I'll save the president some cash. We'll never fly again!

## FROM THE RECOVERED PAPERS OF AN HISTORIAN OF SCIENCE: By Miriam Jones

They made a machine. We were, of course, skeptical: it seemed an interesting toy, but rather a waste of the institute's resources. However, intriguing possibilities soon became apparent. It added greatly to our knowledge of certain matters. The one problem was that the process by which this knowledge was acquired was irreversible, and so the whole question became academic. There is probably no solution to this dilemma. But then, it doesn't really matter much.

At first the experiments weren't somewhat random and of a whimsical, literary nature. Archwald possesses a rather macabre sense of humour. He was responsible for the transportation of the twin sister of 19th century propagandist "George Eliot" (a pseudonym) from her kitchen to the longhouse of a Mohican war chief. The results were interesting: the experiment was quite spontaneous and when *Middlemarch*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *Anna Karenina* resulted, we were astonished.

Shakespeare (17th century poet) also had a sister. We transported her at birth to 20th century Boston where she eventually became a fairly successful consultant. We found we had to transport them at birth otherwise the shock proved too much and their brains caved in, metaphorically speaking.

After a while the top stratas began to take an interest, and the experiments became more directed. We realised it was an excellent opportunity to explore, for example, several genetic theories. The results were not very favourable at first. In one of the early experiments, we transported a 21st century Latin American dictator into a politically strategic position in 16th century Spain. With a little planning he could have had much power, but he chose to form a marital alliance unbecoming to his rank and propagate himself in the form of four children.... [Here the editor has deleted an obscene reference to the primitive practices existent before the development of extra-uterine progeneration.] As it turned out, he was assassinated, but by then we'd lost interest in him....

At one point there was a heated debate between departments. One faction wanted to perform an experiment with A. Hitler, influential 20th century political leader, claiming him to be the ultimate test case. I must admit that I personally found the idea intriguing. Others argued that it was not right to alter history to such an extent, that the results of such a move would be incalculable, and that it would be ill-advised to begin experimentation on such a scale, so close to home. Ultimately the wisdom of this argument prevailed, and we contented ourselves with sending the paternal great-grandfather of a subordinate of A. Hitler's to pre-historical Tasmania where we hoped he might be worshipped as a local deity. He was not; he was stoned at birth. The Director of Eugenics was most upset. In the ensuing flurry of official invective information was somehow leaked to the popular media, and there was a burst of public indignation. The networks were flooded with discs from the ignorant, who feared they might disappear. Then a new apprehension grew: that people would suddenly "pop up" among them. Telematics PR painstakingly pointed out to them that they were quite safe, that the world was as it was. All that we were doing was already accounted for. In a way, predetermined (we especially enjoyed this irony). Some of us had never before realised the freedom that we had. Osby had an extreme mental dysfunction. He couldn't accept what he called "the responsibility" to make history "come out right." No amount of explaining would convince him that it was immaterial what we did. He was sent for a rest.

Then one of our file clerks disappeared during a routine experiment. That jarred us. We ceased work and ran all the standard checks again. The results were almost the same, and we proceeded with some trepidation. For awhile we confined ourselves to those areas of the world where experimental research could not possibly affect us, but historical and cultural differences made that work less interesting, so after some juggling with Manchu warlords and Australian aborigines we returned our attention to Europe and North America, with the extra safeguard of doing an additional check on each proposed subject. No further incidents occurred, so we attributed the disappearance to a yet-to-be-explained fluke. (Strangely, almost immediately after he vanished, the clerk began to fade from all our memories much more rapidly than the norm. Even those of us who had completed our entire memory training experienced this. A committee has been appointed.) ...

Last month upon entering the laboratory we were astounded to discern what was evidently a rather dazed ancient Roman. Caligula is now under observation, and doing much better than we initially expected. He is a very mild-mannered fellow, and quite pleasant (though Jønberg says that his Latin is at times not entirely grammatical). Of course he is having problems grasping the nature of the present. He was particularly incredulous to learn that there has not been a woman here for seventy-five years. His presence was soon explained: Archwald exchanged places with our guest. Again, research was stopped for awhile.

Today we begin again, in a minor way. At this moment, a tribe of 19th century Afghani goatherds are being



# CONVERSATION OVERHEARD AT WOODY WOODPECKER'S

By David McFadden

The guys were in Woody Woodpecker's. I never did get to see the place but as I sat at the bar in the firehall I could hear them talking about it over the walkie-talkie. They were talking about the giant woodpecker out front and the woodpecker cartoons all over the walls, woodpecker salt-and-pepper shakers, and the woodpecker songs on the jukebox.

"Did you see the jukebox?" Rodney was saying. "Every song has some reference to a woodpecker in it." I didn't think they realized the walkie-talkie was on. Or if they did they soon forgot. Casey the bartender was busy with customers, and I didn't have anyone to talk to so I started scribbling in my notebook, trying to record everything they were saying on the other side of town. I can't guarantee any degree of accuracy. At times the sound would fade and drift and trying to record the conversation became an ink-blot trick. Often it seemed that what I was writing down was coming out of my mind rather than out of the mouths of the boys. And it kept getting less and less accurate as we went on, the batteries fading and all that...

Nigel had apparently just ordered a club sandwich. Think of him as speaking in a low monotone punctuated with quiet laughter, think of Rodney as having a high-pitched boy-like enthusiastic voice, and of Winston as having a slow, lazy, very relaxed, well-modulated and sexy voice. Here's the conversation as I recorded it. Probably tells more about me than about them.

Waitress: "You want *minis* on that?"

Nigel: "Pardon me?"

Waitress: "Meanies? You want some meanies?"

Nigel: "Er?"

"Mayonnaise," I hollered over the walkie-talkie. I'm not sure they knew where the voice came from, or that it was me, but they heard it.

Nigel: "Oh. Mayonnaise. Yeah. I thought you said ..."

Waitress: "Did I say something wrong?"

Nigel: "I thought you said *minis*."

Waitress: "Hah hah, you mean like mini-skirts? No."

Another female voice: "She never wears 'em."

Rodney: "I thought you said meanies."

Waitress: "That is what I said. Mayonnaise."

Winston: "I'll have the tripledecker as well, on brown bread, with mayonnaise? And does that come with french fries?"

Waitress: "Do tripledeckers come with french fries? No they don't. The turkey's still in the oven but I can get you a tripledecker."

Nigel: "Could I have a clam chowder?"

Waitress: "Pardon?"

Nigel: "Clam chowder?"

Waitress: "Gene, do we have any clam chowder? There's no price on that, is there? No, I don't think so."

Nigel: "No?"

Waitress: "No."

Nigel: "So what do you have?"

Waitress: "A lot of these things we just carry in the summer. You see, we're not open. We're only open on weekends now, I mean. See, I mean we're not open all the time. And clams will ferment."

Nigel: "Oh.... What's your soup of the day?"

Waitress: "Vegetable."

Nigel: "Okay, I'll have the soup of the day and an egg-salad sandwich on white ... and a chocolate milkshake."

Rodney (after a pause): "And I'll have the special."

Waitress: "Okay."

Winston: "I may as well too. Does it come with gravy?"

Waitress: "Pardon?"

Rodney: "Gravy?"

Waitress: "Yeah, I'm sure there is. And that's fresh mashed potatoes, you know, not instant."

Winston: "Right. Fresh'll be okay. And I'll have coffee...."

Rodney: "I'll have a large chocolate shake."

Winston: "Oh yeah, that's what I'll have too."

Waitress: "Two large chocolate shakes?"

Strange voice (probably from another table): "You put lettuce on that I assume."

About thirty seconds of static.

Rodney: "... All thirteens. It was April 13, 1970, at thirteen hundred hours, one o'clock in the afternoon. Or no, that's when it happened. That's when the explosion happened."

Nigel: "I have a scrapbook and I've got one whole page full of anything to do with the number 23."

Winston: "What about 23-skidoo?"

Nigel: "Nobody really knows what it means. It's sort of buried in tradition."

Rodney: "I think we started something. There's a flurry of activity in the bathroom."

Laughter.

Nigel: "Some people think it means, like, death, right?"

Rodney: "I think somebody explained what that was once, what that means.... Do you know what rule of thumb means?"

Nigel: "No."

Rodney: "I think it comes from England, there was a law that you could beat your wife, but the whip or the cane couldn't be any thicker than your thumb. And that's where the term rule of thumb comes from."

Nigel: "Yeah?... William Burroughs wrote this really interesting book called *The Job*, with a guy called Bryan Gyson. Bryan Gyson's this abstract painter from England. I guess they were kind of lovers or whatever, they lived together for a long time in England. And he was the one who told Burroughs about his cut-up techniques. That's how he writes most of his books. He'll write a story, right? And he'll take newspaper clippings and then he'll just fold them all up and he'll cut them in sections and piece them back together. That's how *Naked Lunch* was written. And he was probably on heroin too."

Winston: "You mean one article will be cut up?"

Nigel: "Yeah, I don't have anything with me, but it's really neat you can just take anything, right? And cut it four ways and switch them around and get these really weird associations."

Winston: "Yeah."

Rodney: "That's like film editing."

Nigel: "Yeah, and that's where he got *Naked Lunch* from and the term heavy metal."

Rodney: "That's like that Simon and Garfunkel/Nicholas Rowe film, *Bad Timing*. It was like that film. You got the sense you could have just taken the pages of the script and slit them into pieces like this and rearranged them just anyway you wanted to. Did you see that film?"

Nigel: "Yeah, I loved it."

Rodney: "Yeah, I thought it was great."

Nigel: "It turned me off sex for a couple of days, but ... it was a pretty good movie."

Rodney: "I thought it was pretty interesting, but the thing I found was most interesting of all though was that if that film had been in a completely linear order it ..."

Winston: "It would have been awful."

Rodney: "It would have been terrible. It would have been a completely mediocre film."

Nigel: "He's got another one coming out, eh? Called *Eureka*, that was shot in B.C."

Rodney: "Oh ... really? Is that right?"

Nigel: "Yeah, where you're from. It hasn't got released yet. I was reading about it in *Sight and Sound*."

Winston: "Have you read *The White Hotel*?"

Nigel: "Oh yeah."

Rodney: "Who wrote that?"

Winston: "Somebody's making a film of that."

Rodney: "Who wrote that? I meant to pick that up."

Winston: "I thought Rowe might make a good candidate."

Nigel: "I thought maybe Roman Polanski.... Yeah, that's a great book."

Rodney: "Who's that by again?"

Nigel: "What do you mean?"

Rodney: "Who wrote that book? *The White Hotel*."

Winston: "D.M. Thomas."

Rodney: "Oh. D.M. Thomas. Right, yeah...."

Nigel: "This girl at school I went around with, who was a poet and sort of into archery and Hare Krishna, went to see him read at Harbourfront and all these people brought their copies of his books and got him to sign them. And he wrote in her book: 'From one sexual hysteric to another.' She said he was really sexy and everything, this old guy. You can sort of tell from the books he writes."

Rodney: "Sex."

Winston: "I've only read that one."

Nigel: "His other ones aren't quite as good."

Winston: "It's just amazing the way it's structured, the different points of view take over the same story. It's really incredible."

Nigel: "Yeah, I guess I've read it one and a half times. Yeah, it's really neat."

Winston: "I'd love to make a film of that."

Rodney: "Well, that's really the basis for your film, isn't it? The next one coming out, so much of it is different perspectives on things, isn't it? Which is very difficult to do."

Nigel: "I saw you reading that book. You were reading that in the hallway of Women's College in Huntsville. I think you were there the first day we were up there shooting *The Machine*."

Winston: "What was I reading then?"

Nigel: "*The White Hotel*."

Winston: "Really? I guess I was re-reading it then."

Nigel: "Yeah, you were sitting there in the hall reading it. That's a great book. I lent it to somebody and they never sent it back to me."

Winston: "Yeah? So did I. This guy, I can't get ahold of him now, I lost contact with him, he's got my original copy."

Sound of munching on food.

Rodney: "What's Tracy Ronald's new film called?"

Nigel: "*The Ears of the Methodical Druid*.... Terrible title."

Rodney: "Well, it sounds like his other films. *Blues in Disaster City*. Wasn't that it? *Blues in Disaster City*?"

Nigel: "Yeah, and *Trombones for Three*."

Rodney: "I saw *Blues in Disaster City* on TV and I liked the whole thing."

Nigel: "You really have to be into that kind of music to enjoy it."

Rodney: "Oh yeah."

Nigel: "I saw it at the Festival, and I went with Larry. It turns out that Tracy was sitting in the aisle and we were the only people that walked out. It was so slow."

Winston: "Which one?"

Nigel: "*Blues in Disaster City*."

Winston: "You didn't walk out on *Trombones for Three*?"

Nigel: "No. But I sort of felt bad walking out on that one. We knew Tracy was there, but we just left quietly, it was the sort of thing where you didn't make any noise, right?"

Rodney: "A friend of mine and I were really up on making a jazz film around this guy, this friend of ours who goes to Berkeley College of Music, which is ... Do you know that?"

Nigel: "Yeah."

Rodney: "Down in Boston, right? It's just a really amazing place. And we were going to do that. We were really into making a jazz film based on that. And we tried so hard and then ultimately when I saw *Blues in Disaster City* I thought this was very similar to the sort of thing we would have done, and I'm not enjoying watching it at all."

Nigel: "Did you see it?"

Winston: "Yeah.... I worked on it too."

Nigel: "Oh, did you? What were you doing?"

Winston: "I was a second assistant. I didn't have to do too much at all."

Rodney: "You were just a lowly second assistant, Winston?"

Winston: "Lonely and lonely."

The talk switched to someone whose name I didn't catch, someone who'd lost a lot of money on a film. "Holy Geez," said Rodney, when Nigel mentioned how much money had actually been lost.

Nigel: "He's like a technical adviser for some film they're shooting out in Newfoundland right now."

Winston: "It's scary losing money like that."

Rodney: "Oh God, really!"







It occurred to me that my toilet bowl, if I tell the story from its perspective and I decide to make it think, cannot speak with a strong Puerto-Rican accent for the simple fact that the story is supposed to be happening in France, in the east of Paris, a place called Coulommiers. And in France, the minorities don't speak with Puerto-Rican accents because they're not Puerto-Rican, they're usually North African so they speak with North-African accents and North-African women are usually hard-core muslims so no fucking around with emancipation, so my toilet bowl will have to be male, if not I could be labelled as an ethnocentric without even meaning to, and he'll speak proper English, which in the literary sense is the closest thing to proper French, which is the stuff most French books are made of, although this story is written in English as any reader can easily tell, even the ones who don't read English. If you can't read English and you come across a text written in English and you can't read it, you thereby know that the text is in English. But you can also see it this way; say you can't read English but this time you do understand it; what do you do then? You can conduct an investigation or drive a cab and make sure to read the bloody thing over again to find out whether you really did understand or not. I'll tell you, the best thing to do is write a letter to the publishers and get them to send you a written explanation to figure out why you can understand it and let them figure it out. But you have to remember that you could only write such a letter if you could write in English, assuming you understood the English of the given text although you don't read English.

I could write the whole story in French and fuck all the English speakers of the universe. Anyway, if I wrote this thing in French, I could always translate it back into English, but I'd have to make a few changes. Actually, I'd have to make a lot of changes, say, if I decide to give this piece a political edge, to make it socially relevant. If I were to do that in French, the toilet bowl would be a young Algerian bowl with a thick North-African accent and a pencil thin moustache and as a bowl; I'd tell the story in the first person (to be more effective) and I'd ramble along about my childhood in the Magreb and the Sahara and how I used to steal oranges in the covered and intricate market of the casbah of Algiers. And then when I came to France it was cold, and that will be a great chance to draw a metaphor about how climates and people and moods are related somehow; it was the first time I had to wear a coat in my life. Whereas, if I told all that in English, with all the connotations of being an Algerian toilet bowl in France translated, I'm not sure Americans could relate, although nostalgic immigrant stories are pretty popular in the States. But we are not dealing with givens here; I'm sure the average American wouldn't be all too sure about the difference in climate between France and the Magreb; so in that case, boom! there goes my metaphor rendered completely useless because of translation, all my beautiful organic thing about people being nasty in France and the climate being cold while back home, it was warm and all the people in the village knew him. For people in this country to understand that old feeling, I'd have to tell the story of a hispanic toilet bowl with tattoos all over and pictures of the immaculada conception all over the place, and like his Algerian counterpart from the French version, he'd reminisce about the people back home and miss his mum's cooking, use a great deal of details there, say rice and beans while the Algerian could miss his mum's couscous with mint tea. He could even have a name, something Spanish sounding like — Alvaro or Luis, while the Algerian could be called something like Mohamed or Ali. On the other hand, if I were to tell the story from Jean-Pierre's perspective, we wouldn't know that much about the bowl because, then, it would make no sense to make the bowl speak, since all the focus would be on Jean-Pierre's thoughts and dialogues (I think I need a lot more dialogue) and the bowl would only be mentioned because of the constipation. And then you wouldn't see it in a political light, you'd just perceive it as a grubby part of the story, where Jean-Pierre has to confront the issue of having to use the damn toilet bowl, with no seat, which makes it worse.

The toilet bowl can't be a female. If I did make the toilet bowl a female of the species, although it would be a gusty metaphor for women's condition, I think the idea would be immediately canned for sexism. Once you start identifying a toilet bowl with a cause, giving it an identity, making the bowl a mascot, as it were, people are going to take offense. No matter how bad your conditions might be, you don't want to have to relate to a toilet bowl.



Image by Ulrich Tarlatt

## X OR Y By Fortner Anderson

"The world is mad", a mouth speaks, an eye turns, lips curl, and muscles wrapped tight about the skull shift as a smile forms. Our pale faces reflect a knowing agreement, a contract formed. "Oh yes, quite mad." This is our secret, a pact shared amongst friends, our solace and standard.

The heavy body turns. This is unceasing and constant. It strives, with our books, our words, our amusements, with such frenzied motion to build within the taut envelope of the flesh a self. Of no thing, we construct this platform of eyes, ears, speech to stand against the madness of the others.

This ever active noise. Here in this kitchen the spectacle presses upon the tender apparatus of the eye and ear. The hum of the refrigerator, the leaking faucet — the random and secret dialogues of objects placed upon this table, it is the local venue of a vast theater of cruelty. The eye shifts, the hand moves, and still the thickened airs penetrate the meat which covers the bone of my immobile left hand. Continues — within the bristling nest of the brain, hierarchies, orders, fragments and repetitions, words the past, and that jagged pulsing motor. This need which stains each moment with its gape and touch, a grasping wanting thing which exists apart and below the main ordering body, and there, close, always close is the constructed thing I call my self.

The eye, the hand, ear, and body. The hot organs pump refined fluids through the dense meats of the walking body. This ambulatory circus walks along and through the ordered perspectives, of a world lost to its frenzy. Dark fluids collect in the resonant cavity. A world gone mad. "Oh yes, quite mad."

The eye as a device for viewing, and so one alters the given reticule. Reduce it, twist it, distort it. Cover and blur its field. The hand as a vehicle, it shuttles informations toward and from the main ordering body, so it is bound tight, contorted till its gesture is frozen and its sensation permanently blunted. Because it is an enemy, the ear must be stopped, or filled packed with too many informations. It must be confused, its intentions thwarted. The body, cover it, insulate it from the harsh open lights. Channel the intellect, concentrate and intensify this faculty upon the random, the absurd, the unmeaning accumulation of objects and devises which surround and attach to the main ordering body through the tenuous links of this already altered perception of the exterior.

Still the silence penetrates to the resonating cavities at the base of the brain.

He is the cartographer and the guide, charting modes of sight, of hearing, touch, thought and desire. He presents us the spoor of that personal investigation. Value. And before us we have the flawed leavings, the carcass half-eaten, the rotting perfection, a tinsel dream. And so it is ours. Imperfect and constricted. These signposts, many illegible, others broken, coded, altered, effaced, false. But they are, and so suggest other realms.

He gave his life to these dangerous pursuits. A twenty-five year investigation which ravaged the body, estranged the intellect and left him at his life's end utterly alone. Final moments, an austerity which could no longer sustain a self.

A failure.

As if the life might succeed.

## SLICKER'S THIRD DAY By Stephanie Dickinson

The third day you float inside the parked car  
your body spreading out and shapeless

Left eye swells shut this afternoon and funny  
how the police glide by in morning at noon  
again this heat stamped afternoon

not noticing unmotion

remember the placid day  
the unbearable heat stamping the trees  
spinning air gluing shoulder to hand  
to thigh as the green drawn up in your  
syringe squirted into your veins throbbled  
sweet in your throat before walking  
into your heart?

Behind the railroad tracks sun  
still draws steam green from the grass  
the dripping leaves JESUS remember how the tracks  
sizzled dancing jittery from all night  
switching gnatlike white heat  
bUzzinG god bUzZing hot and the leaves  
bejeweled dazzing dipped in blue  
in mollen green

and the bees  
the visible yet not  
stingers shooting up like wishbones

the patrol cars circle in spells of black  
and white dizziness on the horizon  
how binocular their heads on the flat  
edge of the earth now that you have fallen off.



# THE WAY HEAVENLY BODIES EXIST

By Marty Gervais

"You exist, you think, the way the heavenly bodies exist ..."  
Maps, Nurudden Farsh

I am better organized now  
It seems everything, or for that matter, everyone, is at my disposal  
No longer is there a problem with finding time  
The difficulty is in finding words

Yet I am here again trying to make sense of everything  
to gather up memories, thoughts  
but find nothing to say  
At times even the things I like best seem repellent

Believe me, it's true, I am not certain why this is  
Scattered about this hotel room are books & newspapers  
I find I can hardly finish a paragraph  
I prefer to stare at the television that has been shut off

## BEGINNING

By Yves Troendle

This is the beginning of the story. Shivering orange light suffuses the screen and pulses through the smoky air. He is conceived at midnight on the stone floor of a church: *The appearance of numerous beautiful realms of arousing form, the appearance can be seen.* As the first puppet nears the screen a blur on the opposite surface darkens and resolves into lace-work that forms a figure breathing to the swaying flame. And this is how it happens: a nun comes to this church to ring the bell, and as she's swinging the rope she meets a warrior. This shadow-figure, slender, curved like an elegant bird, embodies a departed spirit. *The noble Overking of everything, may we have His help.* Now striking a copper plate, the dalang cues in the musicians: the deepest gong starts, its soft pulse eliciting a few meandering metallo-phones, a quavering flute. As the bell clangs above them, this warrior holds down the nun and takes her. Something else is trying to get said here. The lizard plunged down and rippled along the tunnels, fleeing itself, for days.

Or rather, there, since we always find ourselves *there*, without it ever being *here*. The viewer may sit before the screen, where the illusions are unfolding, or behind to watch the chanting dalang manipulate his puppets on the ends of long sticks. Once the nun gives birth to him, and since the king is a friend of hers, she takes the baby to the queen, who raises him as one of her own. There seems to be a fascination here with the cut, splice, incisions in imaginary flesh (stitched together) as we read. But as it rushed through the corridors the lizard's mind was struck, and its panic ebbed away. This theater is said to have begun when a departed concubine was conjured for her grieving lover with a shadow moving on a screen.

This boy, Maeldun, becomes a robust lad, skillful with the javelin and dagger. On reaching Europe, shadow theater becomes *ombromanie*, flourishing as parlor entertainment, then as public spectacle. Having heard malicious rumors that his mother was in fact a person other than he'd thought, Maeldun asks the queen for an explanation. And, "I am not your mother," she confesses. The lizard felt drawn to lovely images that beckoned to it from the end of now one tunnel, now another, now another ... Who is saying all this? We want to know, because we want to be addressed. *The undivided Trinity shows him the limitless ocean.* To find a voice to contain us, and echo in the huge dome of meaning. The king says: "As he was leaving the church where you were conceived, your father, Ailill Ochair, was slain by marauders from Leix. And now that you know this, you must avenge him." *Not content to witness shadows from the theatre, we requested M. d'Ache to admit us to his side of the screen and, for the sake of our readers, initiate us into the process of actuating his figurines.* And what do we mean by "we"? Maeldun goes to the coast and finds out from a druid where Leix is: on an island in the sea. An I, to call on you, to witness me. This druid tells him how to build his coracle, how many should go in it, and when to launch into the churning ocean. What's this? My mouth. Yes, your mouth. And what's this? This lizard was no longer fleeing, but growing fascinated with the cunning circuits it was tracing as it hurtled through them. I want recognition. You will recognize me in my story. You want recognition. You will recognize yourself in me. *Fig. 1 represents the back of M. d'Ache's theatre, with his six busy assistants: note the brilliant oxyhydrogen lamp, and the large number of zinc silhouettes which act through mechanism. Teeth. An array of rifles is seen to rise in unison, being mounted upon a rod which is lowered or raised by the action of a lever. Yes, it's teeth. And all this?*

This puts me in the 'Father' position. The first step was projecting shadows. So on the day appointed Maeldun pushes out to sea with his seventeen men. Some pull the oars; others hoist the sail. I've brought you here for the inauguration of desire. My ... body. Right. And what's this, right there? But to understand the movies, we must trace another development, one which takes us back to the lantern. As father, I empower you to see (through my eyes). 1640: Father Kircher traps skeletons and demons — images banished from the daylight world — on long strips of glass, and casts them through his Magic Lantern. As I place the objects out for you, I'm telling you what they are. Don't. Don't touch there. Right, don't touch there. *The Son sees many mansions with the Father, in infinite series through the colorful world.*

I am told into telling you what they are. These things have been passed down and constitute us. Spectres flying through the night sky come into focus for the spellbound spectators, slide by in parade, swell and shrink away on a screen that conceals Father Kircher as he manipulates the first projector. As the sun sinks at the curved horizon, the wind swells into a storm that drives the coracle all night. These things are passed down to serve other powers, who work under cover of transparency. Nobody's supposed to touch there. *I used to see Father's lantern cleaned by daylight, and to handle all its parts.* Nobody, nobody-What do you call it? . Next dawn, all the men can see is a great expanse of twinkling water, without a shore in sight.

The story sets you down before a stage, then displays its spectacle, revealing that it's cast you in a role. *Yet such was my terror of the luminous circle on the wall that when Minerva appeared in red, approaching until her owl seemed coming directly at me, it was so like my nightmare dreams that I shrieked aloud.* Right: nobody knows what you call it. How many parts do you have? The first island the men see appears next dawn. They hear the distant ringing of anvils over the vast expanse of the sea. *We are encircled by fantasmagoria cast by lanterns, lenses, glass sheets, concave reflectors, projected onto walls, gauze, and smoke.* By its lure of revelation, the story seals you in. As the boat nears the island four giants come into view, standing around an anvil and sending sparks flying with their hammer-blows. That's not a part, not a hand, it's a palm, fingers, knuckles, things.

# THE SPAM OF VEGAS-ROIT

AN EXCERPT

by Richard Gessner

A hunk of SPAM the size of jupiter has supplanted the earth.

The SPAM is an imperial sponge — soaking up the world's oceans — absorbing the continents — and growing the temperate desert suburb of Vegas-Roit, which hangs off the luncheon meat like a neon satellite appendage.

The SPAM glistens: a faded industrial pink chunk, casting massive pork by-product shadows — oozing with bubbling gels and shimmering in the cloudy blue haloes of sodium nitrite -emanting from the timeless but slippery planet.

Millions of cars have been driven into the SPAM's surface over the millennia by countless and unknowing kamikaze drivers flooring their gas pedals to take a short cut to the SPAM's core.

## THE SPAM IS SPIKED WITH CARS OF EVERY MAKE

Pontiacs — Buicks — Cadillacs — Lincoln Continentals — Volvos — Trans-Ams — Alfa Romeos — Old Cutlass Supremes — Pintos — T Birds — Ferraris — Limousines — Jaguars — Corvettes — Mitsubishi's — Isuzus — Mercury Cougar XR7's — Saabs — Dusters — BMW's — Peugots — Hondas — Mazdas — Impalas — Datsuns — Citroens — Mustangs — Z 28's — Camaros — Cheetahs — Firebirds — Rebels — Thunderbirds — Merck-Montclairs — Edsels — Mercedes-Benzes — Roust-Abouts — Gremlins — ETC.

are projecting from the surface of the meat like multi-colored metallic quills.

An aerial view of the SPAM is a mosaic of back bumpers, fenders, windows, trunks and tires, speckled with license plates. The long rotten and fossilized drivers who smashed through their windshields ages ago, are embedded in the SPAM just beyond their steering wheels, dashboards and front bumpers.

The mosaic of car spikes are linked by a vast web of bubble gum — a bazooka vine — stretching infinitely over the expanse of rear bumpers — winding its way through tire treads — trunks — and fractured chassis — curling around — and reflecting in the mirrors of the bumpers where it sizzles in the salty neon air of Vegas-Roit.

Here and there, a stalactite of congealed butter hangs off a bumper and bubbles over at its narrow most tip with the clogged blood vessels and high blood pressures of many a Vegas-Roitian.

Vegas-Roit is a hybrid of Las Vegas and Detroit. It is a homogenized suburb of identical split-level box houses built from the crumbled and reprocessed remains of car factory assembly lines, hotels, motels, gambling casinos, night clubs, bars, instant divorce agencies and porno theatres.

In place of the former earth's extinct vegetation, is a desert of broken-glass-cotton-candy-fiber-glass-sand, speckled with tumble weeds of wool fallen prematurely from flocks of aging pink wrinkled lambs wandering against the orange grey landscape.

On the front lawn of each house is a Hermann Goring lawn jockey wearing pink fishnet lederhosen. Each lawn jockey holds up an aluminum key once used to open cans of SPAM back in the old days when it was packaged in cubed shaped metal containers. The lawn jockeys are testaments to the age of gluttony, quaint kitsch relics of a bygone age, but also contemporary humpty-dumpty talismans and reminders of the inevitable exodus of which no Vegas-Roitian can escape.





# COLUMNS

## By John Riddell

### introduction

notice that we always begin from the same start position on the chart which we always presume (since it has always been so in the past) will separate & correctly identify the continuing movements of two points

one representing us the other representing them  
always moving at regular intervals back & forth leaving the slightest trace each time accumulating as "reservoir" building

finally forming into a pattern of recognition

which may be traced  
as a series of columns which enclose a beat not unlike a heartbeat  
which manifests itself as a generally relaxed rhythm (column "B")

which only occasionally aberrates into the red zone (marked by column "A") on the one hand or into the green zone (marked by column "C") on the other

a further series of striated columns extends outwards in both directions vertically from these three primal structures

all  
columns are heavily encoded with privatized data imbedded within statistically significant (simulated) societal contexts

each behaviorally  
accurate to within three percent of its registered figure

(no individual  
exists entirely in any one column neither does any single column represent the complete (horizontal / social) display)

the overall  
structure when viewed from a distance resembles a gigantic cross-hatched rectangular screen

1.  
finally we close ranks on the enemy whose profile is integrated onto a point-set topological map the general lay on a table close to the screen doors (necessary to keep the insects outside) so that we may see

the general advance of our troops (moving point 1) as opposed to those of the enemy (moving point 2)

the screen door flaps intermittently  
loudly shifts under pressure from a south wind she sits at the table watching the progress of her mind on a screen

there are no answers no  
one is there the wind increases to a howling

2.  
we take an end stitch &  
suture through the follicles of an embryonic layer which lay at the mouth of the opening a local anaesthetic is applied the knife slits & ruptures through a daylong session of watching

as the troops advance  
into enemy territory rape & destroy at their leisure enjoy the killing

outside of the screen door there is a willow which waves gently in the wind above the tree the sky is blue peppered with slow-moving clouds which sail gracefully from east to west

although it is midday a faint  
yet clear outline of the moon is visible

she stands on the steps she  
looks up she does not see the clouds the sky or the moon she  
sees the fighter-bombers of the invaders she watches them suddenly  
break formation dive release their cargo of death

there is an  
insect caught in the screen door it has been struggling for some time  
to free one of its antennae which has somehow become ensnared in the  
wire mesh of the screen finally it rips free flies away less an  
antennae

### Column "A"

3.  
they tell us there is no life after a speech which  
"delimits the density-ratios of survival" what this means no one will  
say we cannot get the information we need in order to conduct a  
successful campaign what are we to do where are we to go some say  
"leave the city go to the country" yet those in the country say they  
have been abandoned too who will grow the food not me i have  
forgotten how i have forgotten what it is like to struggle to feel  
my body on the vine my arm caught in a machine i cannot free myself  
from

there are those who say we do not have enough there are those  
who say we have too much already that we should no longer allow others  
in others who will take from us the plenty that we have that we  
must protect ourselves from there are those who just say

those who do  
(column "D") tend to be silent unlike the others they know they do  
not know the others do not know they do not know so they talk & talk  
& talk &

i have forgotten what it is like to plant seeds to watch the  
passage of the day to be thankful grateful to pray for rain for my  
crops (as opposed to merely cursing / enjoying it should it fall)  
i never knew what it was like to kill animals so that i could eat them  
i never gave thanks to them or to the vegetables or to the sun the  
rain the air for the life they gave me

the sun the rain the air now  
exist in column "A" the danger zone

4.  
as the war goes on our hearts bleed  
our minds die in fear of death

column "C" moves into column "A" & back  
again the course of these events is duly charted it often occurs to  
many of us that there is no one there but of course that is not at all  
true since we are all here

the planes have passed by dropped their  
bombs on the enemy there just over the hill in the capital city  
where (it must be presumed) the enemy feels major strategical technical  
political & communicatory facilities are located

"the accompanying  
annihilation of hundreds of thousands of people is an unfortunate by-  
product of hostilities which we all deeply regret but it is necessary  
insofar as we must protect ourselves from attacks which would do the  
same to us"

no one really knows what we are fighting for some say  
territory some say power some say we are fighting for the "right" way  
to live

some say we are fighting for "Lacidone the crystal-clear  
mouthwash" "Phenox" the underarm deodorant "Silvitone" the plastic  
sandwich wrap corporation which has a large & prosperous factory in a land  
wracked with hunger & war

the notes on the maps are indexed according to  
a ratiocentric-historic view which takes into account Geo-political  
interests

5.  
the planes buzz in lower nearer to where she lives she lives  
alone her brother was killed in the war last year her husband the year  
before the children once they were old enough left for the city  
vowed they would return she has not seen or heard from them since there  
are no phones there is no electricity she grows what she can in the  
garden constantly at war against insects birds rodents some of  
which she manages to kill skin eat  
she has a generous supply of matches  
which she uses sparingly keeps safely wrapped in a drawer to keep them  
dry when the rain comes she lives in the centre of an intersection there  
is no one else there nothing has happened there for years her home is  
bounded on one side by an empty freeway on the other side by an abandoned  
Shopping Mall & several suburban homes long since razed mangled by bombs  
grass grows through the cracks in the pavement "soon it will crumble to  
nothing" she thinks as she looks towards the west towards the setting  
sun which she knows she should not stay in for too long even the sun has  
become dangerous has (she notes according to the chart) moved into  
column "A"

she is herself a column "B" candidate she tried to obtain  
the proper papers last year (papers which would entitle her to an  
annual stipend from the government) — in vain she was told that  
yes she was qualified but that there was a waiting list so long it  
would be years before her name would come up "but don't despair the  
official said "many will die before that time many have already been  
reclassified into columns "D" & "E" why we even have a few entries  
in column "F"! she noted with rage & disgust how much pleasure  
the official took in regulating the agony in peoples lives

6.  
the general  
marked the advance of the enemy into civilian territory "we shall have  
to bomb it" he informed a nearby field marshal "we must not be afraid to  
act"

she sat on the porch waiting for the sun to rise unable to sleep  
this was not unusual she had felt like this many time before

"note  
the regional overlays marked on section 17" the field marshal said  
"note how the resolution of different points intersect to determine the  
actual & projected detail of movements of either benign or hostile  
forces & subsequently set to rest in a variety of striated columns  
to be eliminated as the need may arise"

he pointed to a shaded area on  
the chart "men we shall have to neutralize this area here before  
dawn"

the planes broke formation dove were lower nearer than ever  
before she heard them buzz out of the night she could not see them  
she was afraid she ran inside she tried to adjust the screen but  
she could get nothing no information no one was there



# ONYCE

## By Robert Zenick

Salvation will not come  
In pills,  
Or dollar bills  
BUT THROUGH THRILLS IN GOD,  
AND HIS SON JESUS, THE CHRIST.

### EXPECTATION

i.e. A SINGLE ONYCE SYMBOL

(A)

I  
The eyes of my blindness  
Circle the moon,  
Heart of my temptation  
Beat out the rhythm —  
Blocks regain conscious symbol  
And awaken  
A new sun set free!

II

The sounds the children make  
Are the noises adults create.

III

The nervousness of a nation  
Is the pin in its balloon.

(B)

I  
Many sheep have left the flock,  
And traded in the wind,  
For the chiming of the clock.

II

We all want some little things. A tiny, piece of bright jewelry to adorn our heads, or put on our clothes so that we may be better than others. Small ornaments that are greater in value when we know they have been stolen, we will wear them proudly still through the alley in evening. Ball bearings made from exotic metals or grown in undefined chambers, which, when turned into amulets or engraved and drilled through and laced become medallions of chivalry and honor, its worth dependant upon the weight of its novelty. After years and many burials, it surfaces again in another history, and soon becomes a thing to worship and each person runs to it thinking it has healing powers, or that it can give the eternal life. This grain has a history created by people who need the wealth to pay off debts. People look at it in awe and when at home in leisure, fantasize and develop scenarios that would make them owners of it.

(C)

ALBERT,  
THE ANTI-  
SPEYE  
(I,  
SPY ...)

I

A life is bought and sold  
And dreams thrown to the wind  
Yet fatalists find no reason,  
And in God's eyes, men's  
Creations are affected.

Albert looked into the sky, and saw nothing.  
He then looked around himself and became aware  
Of people, insects, animals, world, evolution  
And himself. He had no opportunity to go on.  
Parents were always broke, drinking and borrowing money away.  
At a young age, Albert watched the world,  
Told its inhabitants they were all going to die.  
After reading the bible knew the truth of the statement.  
Wanting to die with the knives stuck through his chest,  
His feet stepped on nails and never healed.  
Albert's eye wanted to be plucked out,  
Arms wanted to be torn away from body,  
Venetian blind friends told him stories.  
Wrecked automobile people spoke in riddles  
Broken boned hypnotists became societies,  
Shadows took on the form of charging railway cars.  
Bodyless heads sucked his dreams clean:  
Shattered windowed friendliness taught Albert,  
Immoral politicians told him he owed them,  
Eyes that witnessed the night touched him ...  
Empty cans were like the souls of his friends,  
His own body felt like a loaded gun  
Thoughts were unattached  
And when he walked, hypnotists touched his legs and shoulders  
So he danced through the streets of the mining town he was born in.  
He awoke from the dream when he moved away.  
Hewasixteenandliketheduckthemigrationbegan  
Hewasseventeenandlikethewindhemovedacrossthenation  
Hewaseighteenandliketheowlheplayedinthenight  
Hewasnineteenandliketheriverhefoundhimselfinthecity  
Hewastwentyandfeltlikethewaterwithinthepople  
Hewastwenty-oneandfeltlikeagutter  
Hewastwenty-twoanddestinedforunhappiness  
Hewastwenty-threeandknewhispotential  
Hewastwenty-fourandsawadestiny

Hewastwenty-fiveandsawabitofohope  
Hewastwenty-sixandpushedhimselfharder  
Hewastwenty-sevenanddreadingthirtyhoursaday  
Hewastwenty-nineandreadingandsubmittingthirtyhoursaday  
Hewasthirtyandrealizedthelifehehadledwithhiswife  
Waspainfulforher.  
Hewasthirty-oneandreadandstartedtodreamagain  
Butonlyafteryearsofseclusion.  
Hewasthirty-twoandmeditationcouldhavekilledhim!  
Albertwasthirty-threeandalmostmettheHolySpirit  
Albertwasthirty-fourandhisfourthbookhadbeenpublished  
Albertwasthirty-fiveandforthefirsttimeinhislife  
Herealizedeverythinghehadaccomplishedwasworthless  
Albertwasthirty-fiveandonedayold.

To live in the world, Gert stated, one must have money.  
Without money, you have nothing. This whole society  
Is built upon the concept of money. You can't do anything  
Without money. You just can't live without money.  
Albert looked at money as a thing to give to strangers  
Albert touched money like the moon touches the ocean  
Albert tasted money and he got sick and vowed he'd never eat it again.  
Albert needed money because he never had any from the time of his birth  
Albert hated money for he knew of its value  
And how, once people acquired some,  
It turned them into ugly mediums of gray.

There was a box on the window sill.  
Inside the box was a gift to Albert.  
The box was made of people and the people  
Were made of clay, and the clay  
Came from the planet earth, a satellite  
In the milky way. No one knew how  
It got on the sill, no one knew  
Inside it was a present, and no one knew  
And no one looked, and no one wanted to,  
No one could, even if they tried.  
The present would be there forever  
On the window sill under the starry sky.

There was a box in a book Albert was reading.  
Inside the box was a present for Albert  
So before he got to it, Albert closed the book  
For he knew if he looked inside the box,  
Inside this book, he'd probably be forced  
To look in the box on the sill  
Of the window, and that he wouldn't do.  
(Albert was then thirty-five and two ...)

II

Near the garden, sitting presently on the grass  
Sits a wooden box, with nails made of human hair,  
And inside it sits a present,  
A present for the rare blue eyes of Albert  
Who looks at it  
And shakes his head and walks to town.

In the city hides another box  
Of which Albert is unaware  
And inside this big box made of sky blue paper  
Lies a little whisp of air,  
That cannot be handled  
Unless it's handled by Albert  
But Albert has some shopping to do in the city  
So the box will be there in the tree  
(Albert is now thirty-five and three!)  
And the box will sit there until the clock ticks off  
AM 3 past 3.

"Albert!" Albert's mother yells from 2,000 miles away.  
"Albert! you stop that playing around! You know what a bad lad you can be, So you get away and talk to the birds in the stores, talk to the birds in the bars and the birds where you work, the birds in the streets, TALK TO THE BIRDS, ALBERT! And when I come home, I'll bring some seed."  
(Albert is thirty-five and four ...)

III

Money means mess to Albert Malbert,  
Money means motion, mobility, measliness, mockery and monkey.  
Money to Albert Malbert, means music without an instrument,  
A voice without a melody,  
A song without music,  
So Albert Malbert hates money,  
And that's  
Why when he has it he gives it away.  
(Now, Albert is thirty-five and five days old!)

IV

On Albert's thirty-fifth and sixth day birth day Albert Malbert looks away. His eyes move away from the city of his birth, and look toward the arrow flying toward the sun. "What has begun of that arrow," he asks himself, "Why am I so sure it will land in the yellow of the sun? I would like to be with it," he adds, then thinks: "I will let my body of earth, dust in the streets, acid in the air, poison in the lakes become the lion in the grass.  
And flee my body  
And jump into the sea.  
There I will rest, and there I'll be free."  
Albert Malbert pauses.



V

A wiseman walk toward Albert. The wiseman's clothes are made of human bodies that are talking to each other, in a foreign language. Albert looks at the wiseman. Albert points at the wiseman. Albert bends down and picks up a branch of a tree and points it at the wiseman, who walks closer and closer to Albert. Albert picks out words from his vocabulary, ties them together with spit and holds it in his free hand, then points it to the earth. The wise man is sucked into Albert's pointing finger, this wiseman floats inside Albert's body, then quickly exits into the word point made of spit and words and is flung into the air by Albert and where it lands only the other lands can say! Albert hopes it will land near New York City. Albert really wanted it to land in Sudbury, on a main street, on some busy day, downtown in the city. Albert wanted many things to happen to the wiseman. The wiseman was really a dead goat's skin. It was all the people from the city in the dead goat skin that made Albert want them to go away.  
ALBERT DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO TAKE THEM.

(D)

BAPTISM  
FROM SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION  
AND GENERAL FREEZE

I

I don't understand what I'm looking at —  
Can we all be that blind?

Some little fossil rock  
Shimmering under the sun,  
Under the blue sky,  
Caught within the eye,  
Sitting purposefully,  
Collecting dust,  
On the hard-ground clay.

God! The way the earth turns  
And the sun shines.

(A history within without with all  
No one can recall ...)

Blue sky,  
Blue eyes,  
Blue water,  
Blue mood.

If the artist stopped creating  
The world would not exist.

There are no more people left here  
Who can describe the weather — outer, or inner.

Even the sun shines.  
The stars even shine.  
It's all so amazing.

I never used to look at you.  
I look at you now  
And I don't understand what I'm looking at.

Later,  
You'll realize sin,  
And the Earth,  
As well the snake,  
SIN  
SIN  
SIN  
Snake and Earth —  
Earth!,

EARTH!!!

Planet of my birth!!!

II

In youth  
I was a cliché,  
In my teens  
I was a cliché,  
Now that I'm older,  
And wiser,  
I'm a cliché;  
And my death will be a cliché.

(Something must be left unsaid  
But I will not be the person to leave it that way!)

III

What can I look forward to?  
An end of the world?  
Maybe it's best, an end of the world,  
I am going to die, so let it all die.

IV

I do love people.  
Even if you hurt me and pull out my nails  
And cut off my arms or pull out my eyes,  
I am human and I will forget, and I will forgive.

I will forget, again I will love you,  
After I have healed my wounds.  
I will forget, I will love you,  
But I will not understand,  
I will look at you,  
But I will not understand.

V

Yesterday in my dreams  
I was laying under a tree,  
And the fossil pushed itself into my view  
While I was dreaming.

I refused to answer the questions it asked.

Today I walked through a park  
And saw the tree which, the day before,  
I was dreaming under.  
Milky leaves were talking under the sun,  
Not at all like in my dream,  
Dropping off,  
Floating away,  
Pack of gulls,  
Tomorrow might not come, it's ok,  
Winter cataclysm,  
Downright atomic,  
NEVER, ALWAYS!: bomb shelters, radiation freeze,  
Neutron bomb has human gone,  
Mental cavities.  
I will forget, I will love you,  
But I will not understand.  
I will look at you,  
But I will not

(E)

SUDBURY and ME

I

Life, is the harvesting of the killers crop.  
I lite another cigarette.  
It's my birthday today.  
It is the most memorable birthday I've had in my life — I'm 36 years old.  
I will not start this story when I was born.  
I will not divorce myself from this book.  
Being 35 was not easy.  
Planet Earth, plant life, animals and fish are the purest form of  
perfection to me.  
People are poison.  
My individuality will be my downfall.  
My perception is through mathematics and family.  
Schizophrenia's noose is tight around my neck.  
When I look into my mind I look young.  
When I look into the world from the vantage point of my eyes,  
From inside my mind, I want to die,  
The people push me into death.  
My raison d'être being suicide.  
LONELINESS IS SUBJECTIVE, AND LIFE IS LITERAL.  
While cloth covering the body in the winter in Sudbury is necessity,  
The moon-like terrain of Subury  
is INCO's politicians making its employees feel like aliens.  
(INCO does this all the time  
INCO doesn't want culture ...).

When I boldly went where no man had gone, Mayor Wong was laughed at by  
an INCO Alderman, a salaried, INCO employee, fat and spongy, isolated and  
cronically nickled.

I called INCO several times. Imagine a voice, a kind of voice that  
echoes and reverberates, like a voice from somewhere,  
a voice like from outer space,  
like from burning wires of a telephone line moments away from destruction,  
a voice of a god, somehow caught on a telephone connection you've plugged  
into  
and listening to your waiting for a person to tell you that funding is not  
available for your project, that your literary journal is a farce and you  
know INCO's profits were 85 million dollar\$ last year and you remember  
your father telling you he knew about shift bosses on INCO's payroll who  
were sent out to Union meetings to murder the leaders and you listen to  
this weirdly, reverberating voice on the other end of the line,  
the voice of a Simple human, in an office made of wood and concrete and  
steel girders and glass and underlings that are human  
and the voice sounds so omnipotent,  
so powerful,  
so righteous,  
so humorous  
that you start to laugh at the INCO god, and when he hangs up because of  
your laughter you know his thoughts are on murder AGAIN,  
and he thinks you're crazy,  
and that is why he doesn't send out a hunting party.  
Because he just cannot think anymore.  
He doesn't know how!!!

There are no children  
(only the evil nation's soldiers  
Pillaging and murdering innocence)  
When it comes to war.

— It's in the very same position in which all the politicians in Canada  
(if you go to war what right do you have to ask us to fight in it, when  
peace has already been accepted as the approach a moral, legal society  
would take, especially a society as moral as North Americas', so pure it  
insanitizes its patriots, by not only, decriminalizing its murderers by  
sanitation, but by allowing its press to interview the guilty, allowing  
them to rant and rave over air-waves, so public.  
Prisons do not keep them in  
Nor make this society free.)  
find themselves ...

II

The simple are the stones of the earth,  
The rulers, the mortar of the tornado.

III

As I lay here on the floor another cigarette is lit. The fire of the  
match is extinguished. My throat is caked with tar. I take another drag.  
Put ashes in the ashtray. Take another drag.  
In fifteen minutes it will be March 26, 1986.  
Cigarette break is over, I have to go back to my drill, the ringing in  
my ears. It's pick on INCO time today.



from THE VANCOUVER  
RORSCHACH CONSPIRACY  
by JIM FRANCIS

RORSCHACH #2

Twice on the cable-car ride up Blackcomb Mountain I pulled out the hardshell case I keep my sunglasses in. It did me no good. I'd put them on when the three of us got out of the rented Volvo at the base.

I was sitting in the middle and they leaned forward to talk across me. The subject was photography. He told her that all the sunlight reflecting off the snow would make her built-in light meter go whacko. He said a bunch of things about F-stops and shutter speeds. She wished she had a zoom lens.

I interrupted to suggest we should lower the cable-car hood. The glass hood was tinted. They vetoed the suggestion, appalled but not surprised.

Our host had kindly outfitted us with gloves, before we'd rented the Volvo in Vancouver. I managed to leave mine on the dash, so she gave me her right one and we stuffed our bare hands into my left coat pocket. Her thumb moved slowly back and forth over mine as we three ascended.

He told her she should bracket her shots if she wanted to make sure she got the right exposure. She said she couldn't afford to so I assumed bracketing somehow used up a lot of film.

At the top of the mountain the chalet was already starting to clear out. It was late afternoon. She walked around outside the chalet and finished her roll of film while we sat inside drinking espresso and discussing the ramifications of the October stock market crash. He'd lost money, but not too much.

She came inside to put a fresh roll in her camera. Somehow the film broke when she tried to rewind it. We used an inverted coat — his — for a makeshift table-top darkroom. He got the film out of the camera and into a container.

I wondered out loud what time the cable-cars stopped going back down the mountain.

While our host went to the washroom we had sex in a storage room that one of the busboys had left unlocked. Her grey cotton pants with the pleats just below the belt were loose, fell straight to the floor when I undid the button and zipper. Her cheeks were cold in my hands.

We left the storage room and our host, who was now working on another espresso, gave me an exasperated but amused smile. She rushed outside to take some more pictures, in case the rescued film proved to be a complete write-off.

When she finally joined us, over by the cable-cars, she looked sad and angry. Post-coital tristesse. Her right hand was turning purple, but she refused the glove when I offered it to her. All the way down the side of the mountain she kept her hands busy, fiddling with the camera strap and the lens cap.

RORSCHACH #4

None of the people I talked to could explain it. Nobody they knew actually ever voted for the goddamn Socreds. Nobody was dumb enough to not see through the Socred scams. Everybody knew they were selling off B.C. land to Hong Kong corporations, then claiming success for their economic policies because the coffers were full. Everybody knew about the great Gerrymandering swindle. It was referred to as Gracie's Finger.

Legend had it that almost half of the Socred MPP's were former used car salesmen.

In the playhouse and the concert halls you could hear the words of doom whispered during intermission: Vander Zalm's Wasteland! In the bookstores and the cinemas: Vander Zalm's Wasteland! In the galleries and the museums: Vander Zalm's Wasteland! Everybody knew that the revolution was approaching — but nobody knew who voted for the Socreds.

RORSCHACH #6

In the Vancouver Art Gallery I was nursing a headache and running a mean temperature. A young woman with wavy blonde hair sat looking bored behind a little desk, attending to the comings and goings to and from a darkened room. It was a weekday morning. There were no comings and goings.

A tiny sign to the right of the door said TUTORIAL. A notice typed on white paper was taped to the wall next to the sign. "To ensure safety no more than two persons will be admitted to the room at any one time." I was alone.

Before she sent me in, the young woman with the wavy blonde hair suggested I should simply stand still for a moment after she closed the door behind me. The room was reputed to have a disorienting effect on its visitors.

A rubber strip around the frame of the door precluded the intrusion of light from external sources. There were two voices, teacher and pupil, that came from all corners of the room. Near the wall directly opposite the door stood a chair and desk. On top of the desk were a lamp and a book. The lamp flickered in response to the voices. The gaps between the voices were filled with darkness.

I crossed the room, sat in the chair, examined the book. The text of the book was in some foreign language. I immediately assumed that the language was East European. Occasionally a bell rang. My mouth remained dry.

The amplified voices were aggravating my headache, so I didn't stay in the room very long. It is quite possible the significance of the installation was beyond my powers of comprehension that day. I was fighting a nasty flu bug.

Back outside the room the gallery attendant asked me if I had any comments to make, any response? I apologized, and declined the opportunity for critique. I wanted to sit down and have a cigarette. I sat down. There were no ashtrays. Smoking is not permitted in the gallery. Smoking is permitted in even fewer places in Vancouver than it is in Toronto.

At five after twelve couples started showing up. The wavy blonde hair ushered them in, asked them for comments afterwards. Exiting, always, the women looked smug and the men satisfied. Lipstick was often smudged. After the third couple the attendant looked over at me and I winked suggestively. She stifled a laugh and ushered in the next couple.

After each couple left the room she looked at me, and each time I winked. Her demeanor became progressively less professional. By one fifteen she was a wreck. People stopped making comments. She seemed incapable of recording them.

Then two well dressed young men went in, and she took the opportunity to regain some of her composure. After about ten minutes they came out — one looking smug, the other satisfied. She looked over at me, then quickly looked away as the blood rushed to her face.

I thought it might've been polite to blush along with her. But my face was already flushed from the temperature I was running. She hunched over the papers in front of her and hid her face behind a wavy wall of blonde hair. It would be unfair to suggest that she was creating fictitious responses to the questions she hadn't bothered putting to the two well dressed young men.

"The Vancouver Art Gallery believes that TUTORIAL is an important work by a significant contemporary Canadian artist. We have taken the above precautions to ensure that you engage the work in the best possible conditions."

THE OFFICIAL RATINGS AGAINST  
ABSOLUTE TRUTH  
By Richard Purdy

(10 represents absolute truth)

Law	1.01
biology	4.6
poetry	7.6
smoking	3.0
psychoanalysis	3.6
politics	1.6
Islam	4.04
engineering	2.1
eating	8.2
Christianity (general)	5.0
Catholicism	6.8
Hinduism	7.6
Buddhism (zen)	7.02
Buddhism (Mahayana)	5.3
Buddhism (Thedavara)	8.0
Judaism	6.5
Voodoo	5.5
music	8.8
sex*	8.2
newborn puppies	9.04
chairs	5.0
sponges	3.6
video recorders	4.7
hermeneutics	1.07
surgery	7.0
hot tea	6.9
death	5.5
geography	2.03
terrorism	2.1
Russians	3.02
orange	3.6
red	4.1
blue	4.2
yellow	2.07
violet	2.8
green	3.6
hats	5.0
snow	7.6
syphilis	5.4
art criticism	0.6
literary criticism	0.65
ink	6.7
tap shoes	7.0
gum	5.3
hair (head)	6.6
hair (body)	3.2
gynaecology	0.3
blame	2.3
suicide	3.0
treason	3.7
Adolph Hitler	0.05
Mae West	3.5
Jackie Gleason	3.3
Gustav Mahler	4.0
Boticelli	0.23
the Chinese	4.4
Americans	5.0
Negroes	7.2
Ladahkis	7.8
trappists	6.5
swamps	3.0
staples	4.8
the self	3.9
recompense	4.2
hauntings	7.2
hebrews	5.9
excellence	1.05
sleep	7.9
syntax	2.01
width	5.5
height	4.7
length	4.9
dimension	2.3
love	1.9
stimulation	6.1
trash	5.3
weddings	2.0
quota	5.7
rabies	2.2
please	3.0
assets	0.6

\* this rating is presently under revision based on on-going research.



# LUCY KENT XIX

## (a history lesson/a lesson in history)

### By Stephen Bett

"We are for the large shape because it has the impact of the unequivocal. We wish to reassert the picture plane. We are for flat forms because they destroy illusion and reveal truth."  
Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko, *New York Times*, June 13, 1943

That large shape was just around the corner  
three years before the shelving of your  
illusive poem it's inconceivable  
from this vantage point you could have  
missed it

sitting right there  
on the edge of the Village

even the post-war forties time  
must have felt real  
flattened out,  
a few blocks away over on East 8th  
it was all about to happen  
at "Studio 35":

the Abstract Expressionist loft  
· a.k.a. New York School  
· a.k.a. Tenth Street School

New York, such a big  
field to get lost in  
(evidently illusive)

Also as evident) why  
life at the heart of your block  
played on an old world tune  
that black guitar West 12th  
resisting the beat further west  
in San Francisco(?) a renaissance grown  
w/out you out of Anarchist Circle meetings  
Your dark, measured sounds  
· deaf to the *duende* on the  
edge of a continent  
· static of an old song (saw?)  
an old game

At the Eighth Street Club (*The Club*)  
they were much more formal,  
lecture/panel discussions  
attending to  
"the integrity of the picture plane"  
(this they got from their own American  
backyard, John Marin "using paint as paint")

the talk was of a kind of determinism  
in the history of painting, "a progressive  
surrender to the resistance of its medium"  
they were getting rid of all sorts of illusions  
— all lies (*trompe l'oeil*,  
"the old fakir's trick")

((Williams tells the story of a society lady who,  
not wanting to appear a fool, questions the lower left  
corner of a canvas she was abt to purchase:  
"That, Madam ... is paint."  
perhaps the only thing in all art  
one ever *can* be moral about

((which should go, as well, for those  
inflated figures in your poem

,or perhaps you didn't care for the beer (or the "crowd")  
at the Cedar Street Tavern (put off by the sight  
of a certain poet flashing his knife &  
throwing punches at dubious artists?

Except as here (too) more illusive, re  
-constructed pictures  
(how should I know, I weren't  
even born  
how *should* I know? but from  
these maps on my desk

always the desk — a flattened sense  
of history

#### 2. Lesson one at Hans Hofmann's school on 8th Street:

"... the essence of the picture is the picture plane. The  
essence of the picture plane is its two-dimensionality.  
The first law is then derived: the picture plane must be  
preserved in its two-dimensionality throughout the whole  
process of creation...."

It had all started, on this continent  
with the limners wanting  
"no sense of mass or volume"  
a mere style, at this point  
albeit precedent) it'd be a false start  
waiting two hundred years  
(this is your story too, Lucy,  
retarded history of the Americas  
you've carried it to a third  
century ,as decorative portraiture

Then Fenollosa, the verb-man, returning  
from Asia w/ a briefcase full of *notan*  
& a concern that "there were other  
possibilities  
than a naturalistic art"  
i.e., narrative replaced by design(?  
rudimentary attempt to move  
this side of description another  
phrase for "integrity" · truth  
to nature as in a shared capacity  
to invent

(plus Maurice Prendergast,  
alone of The Eight not a newspaper illustrator (copy-writer,  
even before he saw "the work of Cézanne ...  
was already inclined [?] toward the flat ..."  
a case of doing before seeing

((("To copy is merely to reflect something  
already there," said Williams

and Stuart Davis who took words & letters  
from Cubism ground them  
in a flatter surface  
/modeling at last  
gone the way of the plump guitar,  
just like the figure before it  
squeezed right out of the plane

irreducible, "ineluctable" (the "enduring  
presence of flatness" · Davis carried the field  
alone in the thirties

3. "Every intelligent painter carries the whole culture of  
modern painting in his head. It is his real subject,  
of which everything he paints is both an homage and  
a *critique*, and everything he says a gloss."  
Robert Motherwell

A painter's painter, a painter  
after my own heart he managed to  
reconcile structure & painterliness  
(the improvised gesture, handled  
from the director's chair  
he saw it coming for years  
& knew what it meant —

modern freedom, modernist art  
— their history  
a question of integrity

Still was even flatter, stretched it  
"like a taut skin across the canvas"  
the image "flush with the surface" stymies "any  
... figure-ground reading"  
no longer faking it w/ points of relief

history's now arrived(!) (in New York)  
an optical, not pictorial space  
you can "travel through only with the eye"  
(a street map you cant  
walk in on vestiges of form, urban sprawl

"the whole surface ... a single undifferentiated field of interest"

"all-over" painting · a convergence  
on 8th Street) "The Subjects of the Artist" school)  
action & color-field painters

Pollock's drip method: "the first significant change  
in pictorial space since Cubism"  
further incursion into what limited depth  
remained a fusion of collapsed forms,  
defy description (unfiltered ,integral

Motherwell and Clyfford Still,  
one "presents the impervious surface of a wall"  
the other, "a frontal experience par excellence" An  
"insistence ... on the painting as 'wall' "

A walled-up world

New York: Arshille Gorky said seeing Manhattan  
from an airplane solved his plastic problem,  
how to retain the two-dimensional surface  
of an entire wall



4. But it wasn't quite enough  
the "Tenth Street touch" · a mannerism  
in the eyes of the Post-painterly Abstractionists

Cracks in the wall / felt spaces  
(they saw possibilities  
for further reduction

all traces of drawing, airiness,  
encrusted paint eliminated  
(deceptions of the hand  
value contrasts suppressed  
for contrasts of hue & esp.,

smothered in its tracks  
the "measurable space"  
of the long, painterly brushstroke

((all reminders how I hear your precious  
images, clichéd tone, your  
contrived syntax

((("painting is made with paint and canvas,  
... poetry is made with words"  
reminds (also) a N.Y. poet/art critic

Clement Greenberg: "connoisseurs of the future may be more sensitive  
... to the imaginative dimensions ... of the literal," the flat,  
continuous surface

((Meanwhile, Jasper Johns's flags unmoving  
in the wind · shorter strokes stopping at "a newer,  
higher synthesis" · "a new degree of flatness" ·  
a future that's just there

Frank Stella (along w/ some painters from  
Washington) found an obvious solution:

"staining resonant color directly into raw canvas"

acrylic epoxy Day-glo (even ordinary house paints

right into ("part of the unprimed canvas"  
the last millimeter gone  
the way of illusion itself

or Jules Olitski: "I think ... of color  
as being seen *in*, not *on*, the surface"

5. By critical consensus, circa 1960s & into the present:  
"It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that  
paintings are today apprehended  
with the ears."  
meaning —

a closer freedom closer  
purity · the painter relating/related to no-one  
talking to himself · the painted word  
(no illusions about itself

((("The irritating thing about Philistine criticism is that  
sometimes it's right" (Frank O'Hara) The fact is,  
usually it's plain wrong

((((i.e. they feel threatened, prefer the big lie · "an act  
of barbarism" · the wolf in the doorway (of the sacred

(((((denying the theoretical frame  
· "the archetypal critical *faux pas*"  
"like using a prayer shawl for a cleaning rag"

Stella himself made one more (paradoxical) move  
(while still remaining a painter

: the shaped, 3-D canvas

(no rectangular frame left  
to relate to  
non-allusive /non  
-illusive

the object itself · in all  
honesty ·  
as exists "in real  
rather than illusory space"

((small step for a painter, a  
giant leap for art

the discovery was pure accident:  
"I turned one-by-threes on edge to make  
a quick frame, and then I liked it...  
just enough depth to emphasize  
the surface"

· "as literal a meaning of  
the concept of painting as possible"

self-referring · self-  
referring

(critics had jumped the gun two years earlier:  
"The picture itself is now a *thing*"

## LUCY KENT XX (postscript to XIX) (for Stephen Scobie)

"Painting divided by zero has, however, proved to equal  
infinity: art might be coming to an end but there has been  
no end to anti-art." — Harold Rosenberg

Harold Rosenberg quoting a French  
critic on Paris — May '68, the  
political demonstration as a superior  
creative form

and I wonder about  
the so-called death of art (declared  
thru more than 60 yrs of anti-art)  
in the same spring of '83 where  
right-wing students protest against  
turning the university into  
a public event

It all adds up to a staggering  
reduction of both the art-object  
and politics — an affirmation  
and a death (packaged by the media

to an abstraction of an  
abstraction  
/ the "double" that is art

its residue of active forms — the now  
"official" sign of vanguard purity

and even that, from where I sit,  
further abstracted

So it becomes finally, a "hearsay art"  
speaking like the endless  
deferrals of language from this new  
"demilitarized zone"

speaking the *myth* of rebellion  
disarms, rather than confronts me

the forms of the world  
in a holding pattern, holding  
the mirror up to history

## SLURRING THE MEANING OF PRAISE By David Memmott

It is a fantasia in a minor key  
with few scenes for many extras.

Imagine ten tinsel nuns  
drubbing tympanis with their own shinbones.

It is a bellicose theocracy  
of silent sycophants

tugging dry plum scrotums  
over gun barrels,

slurring the meaning of praise  
with an opposable thumb.

And every nuance of licorice-lipped  
palominos pawing their turf

gets lost in hyperboles  
of infatuated sops watching soaps

swearing that's the way the world turns  
til their brains plainly petrify.

The unmitigated mediocrity of Mr. America  
flexing in a t-shirt

bogs down in the guile and guck  
of self-conscious humility.

the xenophobia of loitering lemmings  
procreating in haste

deflects a simple overture  
from the gray interstices of mad wisecrackers.

So they model rainbow regalias and pucker  
to hide yellow dentures

corroded by the promiscuity of politicians  
and psychotic ambulance drivers.

It is a medley in which painted ladies palaver  
while a paean of tumid teachers

strike the clown with a cloying tune  
conning their way into heaven.



## 4 POEMS

### Par Alain-Arthur Painchaud

1.  
Sensibles aux écolos moqueurs  
Ami-croscopique relation  
Qui nous transmarginalise  
Dans les univers communiquants  
Sensibles aux rayons cosmiques  
Il n'y a de grave que la gravité  
Il n'y a d'important que les implants  
Toujours rimaient avec le comique  
En urgence d'en apprendre le plus possible  
Sur la suite du être à l'écoute du temps  
Magasinant pour la résistance

2.  
Mon lot de vie quotidienne  
La religion du présent  
Amateur de casse-tête  
Trouble-fête de la quiétude  
La recette de ma vie spleen dix spleen  
J'ai doublé le facteur G  
Je veux construire mon tombeau stellaire  
Dévasté par l'incarnation terrestre  
Je ne mène pas ma vie je la dispatch  
Être congelé  
Cancer pour le futur

3.  
Image furtive noire et grise  
Sans lendemain  
Tout azimut et splendide  
Ramassant ces éclats d'être  
Qui font les sculptures de vies  
Tout mélangé pour le texte des plaisirs  
Les rythmes et les scratches  
Le tordage des rubans du discours  
Affirmant l'ouverture possible  
Vers l'amour-camaraderie  
Espion de l'amour sans maison

4.  
Que la caresse de ton esprit  
Vaut mieux que la passion qui dévore les corps  
Qu'une amie qui a soif dans le désert  
Faut lui donner à boire  
Qu'un ami en ville tombe  
Il faut le relever l'envoyer s'écrouler  
Qu'es-ce qu'il faut que je donne au monde  
Ma vie mon sang ma détresse  
Fabriquant de noeuds  
Dénoueur de coeurs  
Turbine de consciences



Image by Beth Jankola

## LE DROIT DE SAINTETE

Par Denis Vanier

Un peu de salive, pas trop épaisse  
comme celle qui se mêle aux aliments  
de la prostitution anti-physique  
à l'effacement des plis  
aux crêtes du pourtour  
guéries par l'onguent des morts.

Nous descendrons où l'homme ne vit pas  
où pour donner à leurs perles un teint de lait  
les huîtres s'ouvrent aux eaux douces  
du lever de l'ancre  
frottent leurs muqueuses aux sulfamidés  
des cuisses des plongeurs  
et collent aux débris de la navette  
des ancêtres,

faut-il s'user encore, atteints et s'excroissants,  
pour s'en remettre  
oubliez le désir  
et son bouche à bouche, condamné bien avant,  
la réalité de la poésie

libéré(e) par la voie centrale  
du dojo du coeur  
à l'arrière d'un pays de dos

## DIEU TOUS LES JOURS À LA FENÊTRE AVEC SON AMANT ou ATTENTION AUX ANGES TOMBÉS

Par Josée Yvon

débauchées  
délices d'un coeur métaphysique  
dans des cheminées de marbre blanc évidemment  
comme Watteau qui admirait Rosalba Carriera, depuis la mort du Corrège ...  
... et son clavecin ... et son violon  
victimes de l'allaitement  
au bordel ou à la messe  
où un vieux blues décrépi s'intermine  
mais aucun des musiciens n'osa sur  
l'inoxidable déposer son rictus  
et elle me fend  
sous les soucis locatifs  
mais jamais en deux.

Elle fait fuir les animaux.

### ELLE NE FERAIT PAS DE MAL A UN ANGE

de l'âge du bonze  
frelatée au point de boire  
le formol qui garde le fœtus

cette beauté qui ne s'écrit pas

elle cherche encore la veine-maîtresse  
et boit la strega

sur la gerbe des communiantes  
étire sa gomme balloune  
sur la peu du silence.

Rosine n'était malgré elle qu'une incantatrice sorcière  
ne portait que des brassières jaunies  
de corsets agrafés de graisse  
sous sa muqueuse sèche  
se massait encore avec de l'huile de rose  
de l'hyacinthe, du musc

mouvoir son corps comme la Chienne  
des fruits, des fleurs et parfois des balles dorées  
le déisme à la mode  
comtesses, ménagères, courtisanes, boulangères, masquées froissant leur robe  
de satin noir  
et ces photos médiocres que nous fusillerons  
ces ridotti  
pendant que le restant de bois économise l'énergie

### ATTENTION AUX ANGES TOMBÉS

ILS SONT VENIMEUX, ATTEINTS.



# POETIQUE DU DÉSERT

## ESSAI 1

Par Huguette Turcotte

### PROLOGUE

Oeil aveugle d'un espace cyclope, tu es, dans la complaisance parfaite du vide.  
Sans résonnance et sans direction, tu fais éclater le non-devenir comme un miroir brisé en éclats coupants que d'aucuns nomment présent.  
Ils égratignent la surface polie de tes rotondités ataviques, témoins distraits d'un horizon creux où s'est induré le temps.  
Dans la vérité tronquée de ta présence elliptique, s'engloutissent les fleurs incolores de la mémoire et se fane l'odeur sèche des roses de sable.  
Tu effaces de ta souveraine indifférence les secrets lourds qui ont jadis séduit des générations idolâtres d'adorateurs.  
Tu réglais la ronde de leurs prières bourdonnantes qui tournoyaient comme des mouches gavées autour de ton disque d'airain.  
Désert-scarabée, affairé au rite immémorial de l'insecte sacré, tu couves entre tes élytres puissantes l'oeuf incandescent du jour.

### L'ILLUSION

Des caravanes abruties de soleil s'égarent encore aux confins du mensonge, pistes périphériques de l'histoire où s'aplatissent les certitudes sous le piétinement obstiné des hérésies.  
Leurs carcasses ensablées roulent dans leurs orbites vides l'imagerie fabuleuse de tes mirages trompeurs.

Un sarcophage violenté comme une noix broyée baille, sous le plomb d'une éternité évidée.  
Le souverain inerte gît, investi du fade souvenir d'une splendeur éventée.  
Condamné à ne jamais fermer les yeux à l'éternité, il réinvente une inéluctable destinée, dictée par une vision millénaire qu'ont perpétuée des dynasties complètes de pharaons défunts.

La mort, comme une allusion tompeuse, imprime sa brûlure sur la rétine tachée du pharaon autistique.  
De la sépulture ouverte comme un secret trahi, le vent avait dissipé les bandes désagrégées que les prêtres avaient entourées en spirales entre l'infinité et son simulacre.  
Comme une rangée de dunes voûtées avançaient au pas du temps les officiants d'un culte fossile, l'échine broyée sous le poids du néant.  
Atlas fantoches qui avaient orgueilleusement bravé le temps, ils bégayaient les silences inarticulés de l'amnésie circulaire qui étrangle sous sa coupole étanche ce vide clos.  
Des troupeaux de béliers fantômes qui pétrifient d'effroi les mortels déferlent la nuit sur tes plaines inquiétantes.  
De leurs mufles sauvages, ils broutent les prairies imaginaires que les reflets de lune leur donnent en pâture.  
L'écho sourd de leurs sabots martèle les rêves enfiévrés des prospecteurs déments qu'encerclent l'égarement.  
L'oreille rivée à la terre ocreuse, ils absorbent, comme des mèches avides, les promesses enjôleuses que les torrents souterrains d'or noir avaient transportées jusqu'à eux.  
Taries comme le puits de leur vie, elles n'avaient plus d'autre résonnance que la complaisance tricheuse d'elles-mêmes.  
A demi épelées par l'écho profond du sol, elles se déclinaient selon la grammaire dyslexique de l'illusion.  
La nuit embaumait leurs derniers rêves, noircis comme des chacals englués dans le bitume, en refermant sur eux le couvercle de la rigidité éternelle.

### LA CRUAUTÉ

Cruel et sourd aux supplications des naufragés qui se noient dans tes sables, tu appliques la justice de la soif, également, aux hommes et aux bêtes.  
Tes marées mouvantes roulent inlassablement les crânes usés, et ton soleil, plus impassible que l'éternité, fixe l'oubli sur le grain mat des oueds desséchés.

Tu recèles traîtreusement les marchands d'ailleurs, venus exploiter tes mines de sel.  
Caricatures dérisoires de fortunes enlisées, leurs doigts cupides, agrippés à tes mirages, laissent glisser par poignées les diamants imaginaires que tu avais offerts à leurs yeux hallucinés.  
Leurs cris stridents de bêtes écorchées se sont ébréchés comme des lames rouillées contre ton silence minéral.  
Ils ont suffoqué sous ton étreinte torride.  
Le sirocco, comme l'haleine sulfureuse d'un mauvais génie, a éteint leur esprit vacillant.  
La tempête de sable s'est abattue comme une nuée de sauterelles voraces sur la moisson stérile de leur passage et a dévoré toute trace de leur histoire.

Dans la lumière crue se réverbère encore la clameur sourde des armées que tu as défaites.  
Parties des espaces boréaux, originaires des pays du Levant, elles ont eu en commun la déroute, rétribution ultime de ta nature jalouse.  
Blindées dans leurs carapaces métalliques, elles se sont effondrées, tortues préhistoriques qu'aurait abandonnées loin du large une mer retirée. Les boucliers bombés et polis comme des écailles en identifient à peine l'espèce, dans le bestiaire anonyme de la guerre.  
Quelques casques isolés lancent accidentellement des éclairs au ciel, fugaces et vains comme la grandeur orgueilleuse des conquérants anéantis.  
Une colonne de poussière a fondu sur leur défaite, tel un tourbillon d'oiseaux de proie.

### LA SÉDUCTION

Les ondulations capricieuses des dunes laissaient deviner les rondeurs féminines que le désert se plaît à séduire et à délaisser.  
L'eau des mirages, comme les suées de l'amour, perlait sur ces formes alanguies.  
L'indifférence mâle du charmeur impitoyable avait ramolli ses courbes et vidé ses seins d'amante lasse et rejetée.  
Un vague tressaillement que modulaient des gémissements contenus rappelait encore la présence traîtresse du séducteur.

Le substrat des étreintes passées s'était précipité en couches salines d'amertume sur cette terre siliceuse, pétrifiée comme une statue décapitée dans la posture obscène et grotesque de l'offrande.  
Décapée par l'acide viril du refus, elle révélait la nudité crue d'une misère grattée à l'os.  
Démente à force d'en scruter le mystère sans profondeur, elle s'épuisait vainement à recréer l'amant adoré.  
L'immensité plastique de désert lui en avait ravi l'empreinte comme fond au midi la cire d'un masque funéraire.

La réverbération oscillante du haut jour avait confondu ses sens exacerbés. Le sourd martèlement des armées avançant à coups de boutoir vers le hasard de victoires incertaines réveillait en son ventre la brûlure irradiante d'un manque persistant que ne combleraient plus jamais sous leur poussée redoutable les heurtements puissants de l'homme dressé.  
Le désert entier s'était interposé là où la distance n'avait plus été.  
L'absence, comme un souffle au coeur, avait envahi de son tourment la cavité douloureuse de son désir; dilatée par un vide expansif et centrifuge, elle avait acquis la transparence cassante du verre, repoussant les parois de sa propre existence jusqu'au vertige rectiligne de l'intolérable.  
Distendus par l'attente, les écheveaux de son être s'enchevêtraient, rêches et confus, comme les toiles déchirées d'un campement abandonné au sirocco.

Cambré comme un animal sacré, secouant derrière lui la poussière de la désolation, le transfuge au sourire angélique avait repris l'ellipse inexorable de sa course.

### ÉPILOGUE

Les courants mouvants du désert roulent comme un galet trop lourd une tête d'albâtre au galbe si parfait que contre elle, l'horizon semble ridé.  
La pierre au grain dur et serré a scellé toute échappée hors de sa forme.  
Prisonnier de ses fantasmes érudits, il arpente inlassablement l'intérieur torride de son crâne où la nature onirique de son soliloque emprunte la facture volatile des chimères.  
L'ombre d'un sourire s'est évanouie au coin de sa bouche gonflée en une ridicule amère, comme l'attribut superflu d'un dieu hérétique.

Parfois, au troisième soir de lune, quand le scorpion comme un pèlerin tête retracée ses propres pas, on croit voir, émergeant des sables, la tache plus sombre de ce buste placide d'idole sur lequel bifurque la pâle clarté des astres refroidis.

## 2ND PERSON

By Douglas Rothschild

The second person addressed is always plural, the singular person accompanied by the thing in her hand. The statement that anyone, with any other person, in a general way

'you never get used to it at first it's bad, but you can never tell never. never. never :

not the negation of the thing ever at all, but the perfection

of things as faces, as concrete.



# JOKERS WILD

## By Lisa Teasley

You saw her everywhere around Hollywood on the red cruiser, baby strapped to her back in a denim bag. You knew it was the strength of her hard, anorexic body that got you; her long, thick, crimped hair blowing over her baby boy's. You were sitting in Penguins eating frozen yogurt, when you saw her park the bike and come in to take a balloon from the ceiling. The baby boy, with his blond bowl cut, clapped his hands and smiled with his bruised red face. You were charmed by that, but then you saw the bird fly straight into her hair. She jumped back, her bike still between her thighs, and the baby screamed. When she got the bird, it fell to the ground, stunned. The baby was quiet staring at it, with the balloon in his hand, and she stood up on the bike like she was starting a motorcycle. You couldn't see her face, with the thick hair hanging over the side, but she didn't seem shook. She was looking at the bird for a split second, then she rode off pushing the pedals with her strong, thin legs, her tight ass off the seat as she rode, standing. You knew then, that with her, there was always that wild card.

\*\*\*

Nathan and me are like one source of energy, our bodies like the huge powerline semiconductor they're building up in Davis. That energy has been building since he was inside of me, and now that he's outside, it's like he's still growing in me. I used to run with him up to the eighth month, and even past that I'd ride. Capital, A&M, only blocks from our place, and EMI around the corner, there was never need for a car. And Nathan likes to move, he can't sleep unless I work the water bed, and if I'm not there he rolls from one side to the other. When he was younger, I slept with him on my stomach, his face between my breasts, and the water would rock us to sleep, and we would wake up in the very same place.

Nathan and me never want for anything. And a man would be like a car, an extra headache. We're just fine eating corn and wheat and fish and sunflower seeds, drinking apple/strawberry Hansens and milk. When we're feeling a sweet tooth, we put marmalade jam on our bread, honey in our tea. When Nathan was a few months young, we ate his applesauce together, and now that he's got his teeth he chews things up for me. We dance to the jukebox in the dining room, Nathan holds onto my leg, shaking his bum. He loves to draw, and when I'm working Nathan sits on the floor by my table with crayons and pastels, and he draws me or his foot, or the characters he sees in his books. I got the idea for the writing on The Cure's album from one of Nathan's drawings. I don't even remember what I was like before it was Nathan and me. I don't remember how I lived. I can't remember Finch.

\*\*\*

You could handle eating at the Golden Temple, with no meat on the menu, and the human tampons serving the food, but you couldn't take the baby in his high chair, staring at you like you were planning to kill his mother. She and him seemed like cosmic ghosts, moving the way they do, real slow and calm, with these fast breaks of charged adrenaline when the vibes got strong. She had the strangest beauty of a face, because she looked like an 18-year-old beach bomb most of the time; and when she stared at you straight on she was 40. She never said how old or "how young" she was, but you were safe to say somewhere in her thirties. Now it wasn't that she was older that pulled you in, it was that she was so fiercely independent. You couldn't help feeling secure about leaving her when the time came.

She was no easy woman in the beginning. You were close to giving up with that baby there in her bed every night. You even took the shit about you resembling some dude named Finch, even though his picture looked like a lizard. And she talked so much late at night, leaving the baby alone for an hour at the most, and she sitting there on the plush burgundy couch, one leg Indian style, the other knee up, her small, bare foot sinking in the cushion. You kissed her there for the first time, and her look afterward was hurt, as if you'd slapped her.

\*\*\*

I've seen plenty of his kind of thing before. Nathan and me haven't let it get to us ever. Maybe I have in the past, but I don't remember. Nothing is clear at all about those times. I know they were distinct periods, like different chunks of sawed off wood, but I don't know what happened. There was Finch, and that's all I know. I've abused my mind and body plenty enough in the past to have to relive it now. Nathan's grandmother will be here soon enough to conjure it all up, make me spit it up like vomit. And she won't approve of this guy like she doesn't approve of a damn thing. She always asks, what kind of woman brings up a baby with no man, makes a living handwriting on record albums, and rides a kid's bike? I say, *me*, and she just shakes her nasty little neck and shuts off.

I don't care about this guy now anyway. It's the same old thing I won't remember.

\*\*\*

She seemed to want it, the baby safe in a crib and you didn't know existed, so when you hit her that first time she looked at you with this hatred so scary, and so needy, that you hit her again. Her jaw might have swollen up a little, but it wasn't no big deal, made you both hungry afterward, like you'd killed a snake that was threatening her life. She was licking your ears like a dog, holding you tight with her hard, strong thighs. Her skin smelled like toasted flesh, tight and shiny over her bones where it wasn't peeling. She tasted like cantaloupe after it's been in your mouth for a hour, like the salty fruit of your own sweat. But as you knew from the beginning, the wild card came to play, and the baby crashed, screaming. She ran to him naked and beat, with the blood rushing so fast and hard, her whole body looked like a bronzed leather pump. The baby had gotten into the dining room some kind of way, climbed the kitchen counter and fell off the jukebox. He wasn't broken but he was bleeding, and he screamed like his legs were being crushed under a tractor wheel. She was bawling, screaming for you to call an ambulance, but you didn't do it 'cause it was nothing, and you ran out. This thing kept you miles from her for months. And you were relieved.

\*\*\*

Nathan and me are thinking of moving up to San Francisco. 415 needs someone in the graphics department up there, and we're thinking I should take something steady. I've freelanced all this time now, but we need a change. I like the wind up North, it nips at you like a whisper in your ear, saying, get a move on. I feel like we need that, we've gotten slower, Nathan and me, these past few weeks. The other day when Nathan cut his first molar, we were so slow about reacting that we cried.

Nathan and me pretend like we're sailing at night in bed, that the sheets are water, like our bodies are one boat gliding through the darkness, the ceiling a dark sky rising for our way. We are getting thinner and harder for the journey, we don't need a cushion of fat, we need only the quickness and strength of our muscle and bone. We need each other so much now. We're in a bad way.

\*\*\*

She called you back like nothing happened. You told yourself it didn't matter, you knew she could handle anything. That Finch wasn't the baby's father was hard to believe, but you knew she wasn't lying when she said she didn't know who was. You didn't think she was the type to let just anyone in, so you didn't feel for her when you realized she was. She and that baby like ghosts planning vengeance in the place they got killed. Her eyes so huge when she told you she loved you, the baby in her arms with a steady face like he knew she was lying. You didn't know her trips, and you were scared. 'Cause it wasn't leaving a woman that loved you that made your gut tighten up, it was leaving a woman who didn't. You would have sworn she was crazy when she broke the bottle on the table, jagged glass coming at you just when you were trying to face her; but her hysteria said she wasn't insane. You might have thought this woman was a junkie like her old man Finch, if you hadn't known her arms were clean and tight. If you hadn't remembered a bird flew into her hair.

# THREE ANGELS CONTAINED BY ARCHITECTURE

## By Steve Reinke

1. In Veneziano's *Madonna and Child with Saints*, the halo of one of the angels encircles a supporting column of the structure housing Mary and Infant. This effectively makes the angel part of architecture, suggesting that if he were to leave the building would topple or, at the very least, limiting the sphere of the angel's divine existence. This is a very famous painting (it is featured full-colour in Jantzen's *History of Art*) yet I am the first person in the world to notice this.

2. A man woke to find an angel kneeling by his bed. Whenever the angel sighed the man would hear the sound of the autumn wind in the maples for the angel's wings filled the whole room, their tips brushing against the cold plaster of the walls. And the angel said to the man: Take this razor and draw it lightly across my left nipple.

3. There exist, in certain buildings, rooms which are completely sealed off, no windows, no doors, no heating ducts. Each of these special rooms contains an angel who perpetually counts the number of its bones, arriving always at the same figure. One such building is in Warsaw, another in Venice. There are no angels in the secret chambers of the great pyramids.

# A FOREST OF OBELISKS

## By Donald Brackett

Forests can no longer be considered in the classical manner or thought about with the traditional tools. Some cannot even be cut with the chainsaws of criticism. Baking in the barbershop of the sun, they exhibit the secret desire of flagpoles, to be stripped naked by the breeze. Even their stripes have been removed by an obscure history which leaves only traces of memory in the form of mysterious stains. They are oblivious to the stain-removers of culture.

Where geometry meets geography: thoughts seem to stain the silence, images seem to stain the emptiness. In stillness there is a variety of declaration: these are small monuments to short breath, as they cough quietly into their environment.

As an environment it has expanded a study of the aesthetics of ruin. They talk in a language reserved for clouds and announce their arrival by glancing backwards over their circular shoulders, into the soft miniature horizons balanced precariously on the head of each column in the forest. A growth of ivory tubes which seem to talk of time. Here is the entrance to the large hours.

The aesthetics of ruin established a map for exploring a forest of obelisks: maps of another territory where the only tourists are salesmen carrying suitcases filled with silence. Visitation to the cool slumber of ritual. The environment itself is covered by an invisible wallpaper quite nearly opaque and taut, a landscape where the voice of wind colonizes the air. The body of a person entering the forest of obelisks (like the columns themselves) is a memory of the environment itself. A site carefully selected to reveal the hostage situation, where form is the ransom of content and name is the ransom of object. The scene of a crime which has just happened or is just about to happen: kidnapping society's symbols.

What can be said will be said clearly, this will be sufficient. Gestures in the dark will be made in the meantime, shaping in the air a map of the environment. The forest has an aleatory presence, merely a dream which can be shaped to suit the dreaming animal. This situation is a means to an end, a way of enabling us to regain entry to the animal kingdom. The obelisks themselves, do they block the view or rather, do they provide it, creating it out of their implacable expressions? Singing cylindrical songs in their white voices.

The site allows us to leap over the balcony of the future, where cities are its archaeology, and the site is simply a pressure against the rubber envelope which contains the alphabet. The forest is therefore a fence surrounding nothing. There is a limit, beyond which there is nothing, at the border we have these electrical conductors, storing and transmitting an unknown form of energy, the energy of dreams.

One moves along a grid of controlled chance. These columns are a book which cannot be read only because its language belongs to an extinct race. In general we are unable to appreciate the fact that it is indeed our own. The forest wants to take a nap in the cemetery of conversation but it has a penchant for the news: read all about it! Entrance and exit here are mirror images.

The last sound you hear as you fall asleep is the sound of the footsteps of the lumberjacks and the music of their axes. Does anything hide inside these buildings of music? Next to the environment there is a rectangular room with no furniture. The wind collects in shapeless parcels inside this warehouse full of sleep. Oblique objects are seen to assemble and align themselves on the first available horizon, and a sense of enclosure is established at once, of interiors.

A mysterious tourist site: once there were visitors, on a horizontal plane there was cast a beautiful curving shadow across the face of public courtyards. Naturally there could be a folk-dance or explanations but when you enter the forest of obelisks and read the message planted in its columns, the hot sun beats down on your neck with its golden hammers. Who in such a situation would want to hazard conjectures about the future?



# PRAYERS OF STEEL

By Misha

*"There was a small place in Tommy's being where he could still get close to God." — Ferret*

It is a world of living metal. Silicon and cobalt fibers stretch a web of shining strands across his face and hands. He stands on the suspension bridge near Gaia. The winds in the wire warn in steel cathedral sonata.

He is next to no one. A river of chemicals, effluvia and strange mailed fishes runs below. Molten ripples catch the fallen sun in peaks of oily copper.

He folds his hands in his kimono. A large insect clicks at him, spreads its tinfoil wings and flies into yellow. His last orders fill his pocket.

Walking into the shards of the city; clangs of metal assault him. Pings of wired keys splash against the handrails. The brassy wind drifts the night in piles around him. Cones of sodium light carve out the black. Schools of plastic and paper swirl. He kneels. He puts his webbed forehead on the asphalt. He kisses the cross walk. The ring of pope iron on the dumpster brings himself to himself.

He hears a cockroach walking across the rusted rim. His hearing is enhanced. His eyes find the hairs on its leg. His vision is enhanced. His strength is his eyes are his ears are his voice is his mind is his world is enhanced.

He pulls down the chain link fence. He crushes it into icons. The bent poles ring bells against the wire. Suspending the ancient designs above the concrete; flashes of broken glass reflect his jagged eyes.

A rusted hook reaches for the latch. He turns off the night walk. Inside this empty chemical tank, flakes of rust fall on his face and hands. He sits near a phosphorous lamp. He lights pink sterno, pours the melt into a jar and tips it to his tattered lips.

He gathers a rosary of batteries. Black cats leap through red cylinders. He strokes the little cats. He connects them to their wire leashes and ties the leashes to his belt of chain. His furious sparks shock the tank walls.

He sings he cries he laughs he curses. His body is enhanced. His terrible mask is cabled. His monitors roll. Gray static settles on his skin. Hollow howls the holy waters. He crows psalms. The thorns rain. Broken knife chimes, gun barrel castenadas answer his hammered wall. Tommy enhances. He chants. His x-ray, infra reddens.

Tears fall into dunes of rust. He kneels in the red. He twists his medals. Bullet casing insects with paperclip legs skitter. He releases them into the bronze of the city. They are alive with curiosity. LED eyes tick past. The batteries trail him on their leashes.

The sulphur wind, and acid rain, envelop him. He owes his city directory. Father's city planned him. His girders plummet; pick up sticks of cobalt. Rock smashes scissors, bureaucracy covers rock. He was reconstructed.

His metal mesh forms a cerecloth, playing keep away from the radiant skies. Halos fallout of the clouds. He stands by Saint Matthew's Cathedral waiting for his masque. His priestly robes flutter. The stains on the glass rattle. The bell chimes thrice.

Puppets of worship surge into the arched red doors. He passes the collection plate. The altar boy swings by his neck in the vestry. Bells toll. Hosts bow. Wax gutters. The priest in the baptismal font absolves his stainless soul. The confessional amplifies his blessing. The congregation moans. The glass shatters. Chalice spills blood of Christ on the altar.

Oil falls on the polished aisle. Genuflecting puppets dance. The pipes sigh. Tommy's organ pumps the blood from the crucifix into his own glowing heart. Silver coins bounce violently across the floor. A whipping wire lashes. The red curtain is rent. Rage renders dust to fire.

Marionettes chant prayers of steel.

## WATERS OF THE MOTHER

By Michelle LeBoutillier

There's a sacred place in Haiti  
where a river falls  
most beautifully  
They say Goddess hears you there  
And modest devout Catholics  
men and women, young and old  
swoon at her temple in ecstasy  
and revel in the waters of the Mother

Some tear off their clothing  
All frolic and sing  
regain their innocence  
are born again  
are healed and renewed  
in the waters of the Mother

Forgotten is the punitive Church  
the strictures of the Father  
the false morality of society  
And I envy them their pilgrimage  
long to surrender wantonly  
to Her rejuvenating baptism  
and be blessed in the waters of the Mother

I don't know Her sacred places  
Maybe here they have been destroyed  
but I've had glimpses of what could be  
alone on the beach  
walking through the cathedral  
of a rain forest  
giving birth, making love  
But mostly I have to be content  
with sitting modestly on the beach  
body covered, passion stilled  
and sedately dabble my toes  
in the waters of the Mother

## TRANSLATION

By Maggie Helwig

*We also find in some authorities the opinion that, when Christ stooped down and wrote in the dust, he drew in fact a map; and that on this map were inscribed all the names of those who would come after, and the histories of each.*

*Beginning in  
Word*

Beginning with  
the names of waters, Indus, Ganges,  
Thomas the Twin and his beautiful feet  
carry across Jerusalem in Rajastan  
skeptical, smiling, sandals in mud  
brown hands touching pain.

*Blessed be blessed are  
poor the spirit in  
God see see God shall*

Listen, the twin says, standing  
beside a slow river, swift and shifting  
as a two-headed smile —  
I could draw words in the shape of the wounds, the four  
torn holes and the gash; these things  
he did not heal. And these are words also —  
Calcutta, Bhopal. You and myself  
are not such friends of chronology.

*Banquet wedding Kingdom  
similiar is  
of God*

In the blue eyes of the poison night  
O Rudra-Shiva, see your children  
at your immaculate feet.  
Somebody's son  
rides in a silver airplane  
among the clouds of heaven.

The twin is speaking  
bruise-flowers under the water. The question  
is primary always. On certain terms  
belief is forbidden.

*Unless my hands  
the hurt  
place in implant into  
I will not  
if*

In the markets of Kali  
pigeons crown  
the ascetic, aesthetic fingers, ringed  
with a delicate knowledge of blood.

## GOODBYE, MARGARET OF LIVERPOOL

By Thomas Parkinson

Your radical days are over and we  
We gather for the post-mortem bight.  
The house was gleamed for the occasion.  
I eat barbecue chicken and indulge  
with spirits,  
Uncle Leo interludes with periodical  
shows on emotion,  
Auntie Hilda feeds me dessert,  
Your namesake and her husband (Uncle  
Fred by marriage) stand up for a  
principal whose name I can't recall,  
Uncle Ronnie stares at the triplex  
and remembers Thomas the First,  
My father and your son sit together,  
My mother came along for the ride,  
Caccatte cries too much,  
Lily makes jokes and Bill makes tea,  
Louise breaks down at Ron and Barb's,  
Susan and Wayne look like they belong  
in my movie,  
And it was Dewgie who found you wedged  
between the plumbing trapped in your  
own shit.  
Goodbye Margaret of Liverpool,  
And goodbye to the ten cents every  
Saturday,  
To the wrestling matches and those  
blewby communists with hidden objects  
in their trunks,  
To your left breast when his voice  
raged through the telephone like a  
transistor radio,  
But mostly to your Cockney accent  
and the way you said "me" instead  
of "my" or "liccle" instead of "little"  
as in, "Me own liccle (h)ome."



# MADAME D'OVARY

## By Karen Petersen

### SYLLOGISM:

*All cities are plagues by preteen cannibalism;  
all preteen cannibals are into Kabalarianism;  
therefore, all of our urban days are numbered.*

It's all but done and I am almost sorry. I suppose it could be construed as ironic that I'd be ruing the end of this adventure, after all those times I've damned it. In fact, when I think back over it all, I wince sometimes in embarrassment at my naivety. But I can't help wondering (still!) if it would've made any difference if I knew then what I think I know now. Perhaps. But then again.

Yes, I have to laugh at my initial innocence. When I first awoke I thought I was dreaming of who I am not. The women seemed to know me, though, so I played along with them. I knew I am I (not to be mantrically confused with maya/maya). At least I thought I knew. They told me that I alone could save myself, save my Sisters, save the mysterious Greater Self from the Dreadful Tyranny. And I began to believe them. I was the Chosen One, an important mark of distinction in those days, if it isn't still. They treated me with such deference my ego burst into full roaring blossom. Solipsism ruled ok. They kept assuring me of the sacred honour of my quest. And such a fervent little idealist, I. So fervent, so foolish. So proud of being Chosen, so positive that I alone of all my Sisters was the one who really could, really would triumph where so many others had failed. It was All Up To Me.

The Time came, the portals parted and I was sent on my Way with great pomp and solemnity. I was so serene and confident. How I revelled in my role, how resplendent I thought myself. Inexorably drawn wheeling, languidly sweeping in all my sanguine majesty (or so I imagined), feeling so beatific in my lonely splendour. Lonely indeed. Utterly alone for the first time I could remember. I soon discovered a sense of personal prestige is most difficult to perpetuate on one's own. And there I was, in virtual exile. With no one to assure me of my importance, nor to mirror my inflated self-image, my belief in myself soon faded. Thus, those first dark kernels of doubt were sown and forthwith I had a full steaming jungle of them with which to contend.

... They can't just mean to leave me here ... it must be some huge practical joke ... surely, out from ... all these recesses will pop my Sisters, grinning and a-titter, in full chuckle at my gullibility, then, joke over, take me home ... surely ... Chosen, they told me ... doomed more so than Chosen I suspect ... am I just a sacrifice then ...? ... like Andromeda on her rock ... am I expected to be passively content to just revolve here ... not knowing if I should even dread whatever it is that may befall me ...? ... where is this thing I await in this dark war moist then ...? ... in this aqueous nothingness ... vacuous nothingness ... my savior ...? ... my savior ...? ... my devourer ...? I am the Chosen One ... they told me ... but Chosen for what ...? ... how can I save my self ... my Sisters ... when I don't even know what I'm supposed to be saving us from ...? ... I should recall ... what can't I remember ...? ... so damnably helpless ... capable only of rolling around here ... quiescent and supposedly receptive to whatever the hell Fate may hurl my way ... but would any assumingly self-motivated act of rebellion make any difference in the face of the way things seem to be ...? ... I have no say of going back ... even if I knew the Path ... can't go forward ... strange inertia holds me ... there must be more to this life than this death ... what were we once taught ...? ... that nothing can happen which is not part of the Perfection of Being ...? ... was that it ...? ... that it's our duty to accept whatever comes along cheerfully ... secure in the knowledge it's all for the best ... no, that can't be true ... maybe it was that we ought not accept anything until we see its Truth clearly and distinctly ... that we must divide any difficult problem (and this situation must certainly fall into that genre) into smaller and smaller parts ... until we come upon some proposition so simple that we see the self-evident Truth ...? ... but those rules don't apply here ... damn ... I resent this ... oh, I resent it ... what the hell am ...? ...

And around and around I went with all my questions, around and around like a rabid kitten foaming at the mouth, chasing its own tail. Finally, exhausted, there were no more questions left to ask, and no answers at all forthcoming. And when at last I had nothing left to say, to wonder or whine about, when I had given up straining and was at relative peace; a revelation came creeping in, slowly bringing with it a serenity more profound than any yet recorded result of omphalopsia. I remembered the tale of the Vain Prince who was locked in a high tower with a gasp-inducing view of the surrounding countryside from the many castellated windows. Between each of the windows a mirror was set. Our Prince rather more revelled in gazing upon himself than rejoicing in the view from the windows. As a consequence, the only source of light, the windows, slowly shrank while the mirrors gradually grew until at the end there was nothing for our Prince but a dim reflection of his former self. Aha. I had been looking for the wrong things in the wrong places.

So, nothing has happened but my time is apparently almost up. Hence my conclusion: THIS has been my quest. Labyrinthine as it may sound. My reason for being here now is simply to be here now. Experience for experience's sake and all that. I trust the Greater Self is gleaned some sort of edification from all of this. Chosen. So many others had been Chosen. So many others had apparently failed. Martyrs set such bad examples. And now, as I have said, it is all but done.

... but ... what's this ...? ... a change is occurring ... here I'd assumed it over ... perhaps it is only the onset after all ... didn't I learn that once as well ...? ... no endings ... only beginnings ...? ... or not ...? this is the test, then ...? ... all my initial pride at being Chosen ... all my disappointment at the apparent folly of my pride ... all my sanctimonious philosophizing ... is all this about to be tested ...? ... what did I say to start this ...? ... what was the magic word ...? ... is it too late to take it back ...? what's ...? ... oh my ... thousands ... millions ... wave after wave ... diminutive ... writhing ... have they come to see me? ... come to free me ...? ... have they all been Chosen too ...? ... Chosen for me ...? ... all of them ...? ... it must be so pleasant to propel oneself about like that ... instead of just being drawn along like so much flotsam upon the tide like this ... how fortunate the creatures are to travel en masse as they do ... no room for loneliness ... odd they don't appear to see me ... what's left of them ... there seems to be a lot of dead ... or dormant ... swept along with the living ... didn't notice at first ... the living squirm so ... so randomly ... all they approach is each other ... perhaps it's some kind of competitive aggression ritual ...? ... fighting for me, then ...? ... idiots ... use reason ... I am here ... here ... here I am ... the Chosen One ... cease writhing ... be still and intuitive ... what an hysterical bunch ... they really can't see me at all ... I would have to get right in their midst for any contact ... and then a touch would only occur because of my relative vastness ... oh no ... could it be they have no more an idea of what they're doing here than I ...?

Yes, it is all but done. None of them reached me. They all died out banging their silly blind heads against one another. Mindless. Slashing about, ever moving, like so many maggots. Then some were absorbed into these rotting walls and others were drawn out the way they came in. I too am being pulled after them; the return of gravity about as welcome as quicksand. Could I have caused their deaths by my impatient loathing of them? I don't think they meant me any harm, yet they were so irksome. So blind. So fundamental. So stupid. And how, with only senescence to embrace me I shall just seep away, pretending to be quite content to drip off to oblivion and at last, at least, try on sweet death for sighs. One more time.

## BOOT CAMP

### By John Grube

This is think tank no. 1. The induction officer posits the elimination of time. Our time. Space is curved. Now, Sarge, out of the think tank double-quick with the answer!

I relaxed in think tank no. 2. This was one you hired by the hour. You ate, breathed and dreamed California Zen. Finally a dog barked. Time up!

Then think tanks no. 3, 4, 5, and 6. We drew parabolas on the walls, soon effaced with steam. Andrew gave me a sixth sense, I loosened my grip. His big, round, saucer eyes thrilled to the vibrations of love. This was not a think tank at all I discovered. It was a tank top worn by muscular guards. We swore eternal friendship when we should have been restoring homosexuals to honour in the forces. It was that kind of war.



TWO POEMS  
By Brigitta Bali  
Translation by Wally Keeler

BIOGRAPHY — 1981

In the misery-chasm of the mind, a snowmist blossom  
is a charity-blessing.  
I see my future; obese church-beggar,  
knotted hair fallen into blind courtyards.

Tampons, dressings bathe bloody scalpels,  
a dog suckles two white lambs;  
a shrill reality in the dream, a nameless  
open wound is their existence.

Far fire. Troops of ghosts are forever  
flowing slowly like a convoy of vans  
carrying meat in the wee hours.  
The dew in my palm mirrors a face.

My aunt, porcelain-pale, lies lightly  
on the iron bed in the alms-hospital, eskimo  
soapstone sculpture, translucent from bed-sores;  
I pick up your pea-memories dropped along the path,

I learn your tattooed camp number. The carrion-  
consuming wind howls —  
My dead dog's mouth is shut. Human and beast,  
they are relatives in the agony. Barb-wired pines;  
terrible spring makes the sky tremble.

On unbreakable roofs, the snow is a feast

ÉLETRAJZ - 1981

Baljos tudat hasadikában a hóvirág könyörület-hegy,  
akár a zálogházak.  
jövömet látom; hajás templomi holdus,  
vak udvarokba hullott hajcsomók.

Tamponok, vatták mosdatnak vés széküket,  
két fehér bányást szoptat egy kutya;  
álombeli éles valóság, névtelen  
nyílt seb a létezésük.

Távoli tűzvész. Kísértet-csapat  
lassít tömören, mint a hajnali  
hússzállítókorcsik.  
Arc moccan tenyerem tükre előtt.

Porcelánbaba - könnyű nagynéném  
a szeretetkórház vaságyán, fölfekvésről  
átlátszó eszkimó xsírkőszobor;  
borószem - lépteid szedegitem,

gettószámodat tanulom. Dögevő szél ugat —  
dacos pulim szája lexárva. Rokonsként haldokol  
ember, állat. Szögesdrót - fenyők;  
szörmű tavasz keszketeti az eget.

Föltéphetetlen háztetőkön ünnepr a hó.

REPLACEMENT

The dream is a death. Shameful.  
Somebody (SOMEBODY!) in whose hand the lock flies  
open — the bellowing darkness breaks out.  
THE KEY THAT OPENS THE SECRET IS THE SAME THAT LOCKS IT.  
THE SAME MOUTH BREATHES COLD AND WARM ALIKE.  
MY DEAREST ENEMY: THE DOUBT IS OBSCENE.  
The girl has eyes like lemon slices on a martini glass.  
THE AXE STRIKES — ITS COUNTLESS SOUND-WAVES  
ARE THE SILENCE.  
Jéhtamet makde szabboli; who could've dreamt it?  
THE SOUL IS THE RELIC OF WINGS —  
INTERIORIZED EQUIVALENCY.  
Out-laid rails,  
muffled megaphone mouths,  
test-tube god,  
WHAT ELSE, BUT A PRISON-MASK GROWING TOGETHER  
WITH A CEMETERY?  
The guard with his machine gun begins a howling.  
Guide Blake to the water trough; he might get thirsty.

BEHELYETESÍTÉS

Az álom mint a halál. Szígyenletes.  
valaki (VALAKI) kezében megoldódik a zár, a sötéttség  
bőmbőlve kitör.  
A KULCS AMI NYITJA A TITKOT, AZONOS A KULCCSAL AMI ZÁRJA.  
UGYANAZ A SZAJ FÚJ HIDEGET MELEGET EGYKÉNT.  
ELLENSEGEIM LEGKEDVESEBBJE: A KÉTELY PARÁZNASÁG.  
citromkarika - szemű lány a martinis-pohárban.  
A CSEND EGYETLEN BALTACSA PÁS  
SZÁMTALAN SZÁMÚ RÁNCA.  
jéhtamet makde szabboli; ugyan ki álmodta ezt?  
A LÉLEK: AZ EGYKORI SZÁRNY —  
INTERIORIZÁLT EGYENÉRTEKÜSEG.  
kiterített szinek,  
felkötött állú hangszórók,  
lombok - isten,  
MI EGYEB E TEMETŐVEL ÖSSZENÖTT  
BÖRTÖN-ÁLARC?  
a géppisztolyos őt elordítja magát.  
vexessétek Blake-t a vályúhoz inni; megszomjazhatott.

THEN YOU KNOW  
By Jason Weiss

Many ways to kill a stranger  
but he alone can tell you the best one

The iceberg of love: approach  
with chisels, rope  
and a broken pocket mirror

They refuse to tell how they did it  
only getting a little older

Wishful thinking built the monument  
and a pretty girl with her shoes off

Almost a memory, almost a song  
you close the door and wash the stains from your sleeves

TWO POEMS  
By Kazuko Shiraishi  
Translation by Sally Ito

MARCH

Over there,  
March walks away  
from me.

Only a call, and my voice will reach you.

But a dog has eaten my voice.  
A soundless wave,  
I slip and slide like light.

March was by my shoulder  
when it turned and fell away.

Then, I had no eyes  
My look slipped down like dogs into a dark valley.  
The ocean,  
like the road, winding far,  
washes past my shoulder  
and away.

AL'S INSIDE HIS SAX AND WON'T COME OUT

Al's  
inside his sax  
and won't come out.

Evening falls, and the boys  
are all standing on stage.

Only Al,  
holding the rough sounds about him,  
hides in the gloom  
like a young girl.

Woman breaks the seat,  
smashes the beer,  
and bangs the sax against the sky  
then,  
the sax, held up by the stars  
begins to play the stops of  
Al's feet and hands.



WESTERN / SEPARATION  
By David UU

ride down hard upon the village villain seize the mine  
and parcel out the gold you stampeding herds force  
whatever you think they hold beautiful into the mire  
ride up the hill and feel your proud chest rise with  
the blood of others

when we all get it  
together  
we will go sum-where

mount your western saddle get your horses on your  
back and ride away to glory

his trench coat carried a large stain on the front  
where you might expect some foul play

press your own cunt juices and have plenty on hand  
for those long winter evenings when the beavers won't  
let you into their lodge

if I ever do that again I'm sure I'll never do what  
the old man took the ball and shook some old thing  
into the porridge well I could hardly say no but what  
will you say to me when this is more than over and  
whatever did become of the same old something surely  
will be found in the morning or evening star of the  
far away cold night at home alone if what you say is  
true I'll move on that note of discord

NOT FAR FROM THE OLD MELON PATCH  
By David UU

erica showed them what was right  
and fucked the old baron past the  
ripe age of mellow cocksucking  
that made his sweet heart flutter.

"I'll be in that sack of old glory  
hole you shitaster of great delights.  
one tongue up the dark hole and a  
dinner fit for whatever pleases you.  
try my number if you can or shake  
down that moon hanging over your  
head of engorgement."

I sat still for this one watching  
to see what would throw itself  
over her shoulder onto the flailing  
bodies below. but john just stood  
up and pissed on her blonde hair  
while she licked at every stray  
drop.

COUNTING CARS  
By Steve Venright

The government — or perhaps some eccentric individual —  
had commissioned him to count the automobiles which  
passed by a certain roadside statue. The statue was  
on a slight incline, a lawn otherwise landscaped with  
only a marble den set into the contour of its slope.  
At the entrance to the den sat a lawnchair and a coffee  
table supporting an old music box in the shape of a  
dog. When its tail was cranked, the dog played a rusty  
but ennobling version of the national anthem.

Since this quaint station was on my way to work  
anyhow I agreed, out of a remote sense of admiration,  
to bring him his breakfast when passing. This consisted  
of a can of sardines and a loaf of white bread which he  
would wash down with explosions from a nearby waterpump.  
As I'd pause there on the freshly paved surface of the  
narrow road he would descend casually from his shelter  
to receive my offering, in exchange bestowing upon me  
a few words which I might ponder while setting about  
the activities of my day.

"They say that if you hold it up to a mirror it  
will smile at its own reflection, but that as soon  
as you put it down it becomes vicious again," he  
announced cryptically one morning.

And another time, with a poignant gesture towards  
the sky: "Like so many fish upon a trotline, these  
clouds against the telephone wires."

And his favourite expression: "I have a bird that  
knows no words."

This last statement was true, because the statue  
with which he spent his days was of a bird, totemic  
and severe.

In the late afternoon, when returning from work,  
I'd call out to him as he lay despondently on the  
shaded marble of his den. But at that hour he would  
never answer, would seldom even acknowledge me. The  
chiseled eyes of the winged ornament stared obliquely  
at the winding asphalt of the road. I could only assume  
that no cars had passed.

NEWTON FARMS  
By Bill Reid

"Orange phalluses are named carrots,  
Potatoes are bulgy eyes,"  
Said Newton of Newton Farms,  
Whose eggplant arms were outraged.

Pencil thin, Newton knew well his way around his Newton Farm.

John Tuber, grubbed by the roots,  
Blew his tuber below:  
"Harroo harroo, Ivy,  
Harroo harroo."

Not knowing, Newton fertilized furtively,  
Till "Harroo, Harroo" he heard  
From the potato patch he hoed,  
But of nuptials, Newton knew what his ox Hillary did.

Knew not of John and Ivy's love, heard not epithalamium,  
But squashed a gnat on his nose instead.  
"Dang gnat," he said, and dank confetti tossed,  
And wiped his nose, and hoed the newlyweds.

3 GIRLS BASS ACKWARDS  
By Susan Parker

1. past whore dew stream, past filigree, past nigh  
(what lady walked in moccassins by Bass Weejun, what walked in booty)

Trois Mattresses And A Pois got lost in the bois ankle deep and miracles to boot,  
3 Mattresses And A Pea had a red sweater and fucked Pale Face;

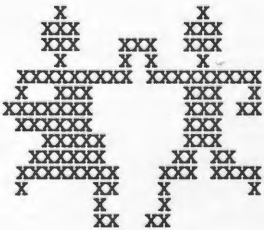
3 Mattresses And A Pea squatted teepee on terra firma, but pissed 3 roses,  
her burning bush;

3 Pale Blue Sweaters had a Pierre Cardigan that wool cost cash mere,  
three bucks;

3 Pale Blue Sweaters wool wash and wool comb out that ravelled sleeve of hair,  
with 3 Cream Rinse;

3 Pale Blue Sweaters wool washcloth and wool washcloth and wool washcloth,  
into that Shakespeherian rag;

3 Pale Blue Sweaters wool petit point to 3 darned socks that wool red;



2. 3 Girls Bass Ackwards that peed in that sea, wool swimswam to the wig-wam;  
(3 Girls Bass Ackwards that peed in that sea, wool swimmyswam on their seashores)  
3 Girls Sass Backwards that summersalt in the sea, wool surf and turf;

3 Girls Bass Ackwards wool wash and wool wear that herringbone tweed from Creeds,  
which was her divorce suit;

3 Girls Bass Ackwards wool wash and wool wishywash that bright red sock that,  
ran in the wash;

3 Girls Bass Ackwards wool either heidi-a-bed or edelweiss wash that gskirt,  
or go gski in Gstaad;

3 Girls Bass Ackwards wool dimsum at the wigwam and wool sushi more chins,  
than San Francisco telephone book;

DOG STAR  
By Susan Parker

There was a dog star but the star chased cars.

THREE POEMS  
By John M. Bennett

SNOW SCREEN

While it snowed I thought I  
should shatter that tooth stuck out my  
lip. No one would see in all that  
white. But you, darting around in  
front, I couldn't hide my hammer,  
hungering behind my head. Flung it in the  
bush was never a hint I  
hated you, never a hanker, hack or  
sock. A ham sweats in the  
fridge, mould glistening around the  
bone. As long as you're in me I only  
slump, not flow. Maybe you're the  
voice I keep cutting on, bleeding and  
licking like salt. Or maybe you're the  
snow I saw, falling off my hair

THE BLUR

Just like a photo, what I  
see of you, sort of flat and bent with  
amoebas of light. Maybe my glasses  
smeared or maybe the shape of air but I'm  
always back in this corner with my  
eyes crossed. My fingernails sodden and  
splinter long to scratch I, scrawled  
in this book my finger distended past my  
nose; tho read it's still just  
tissue wiped and dropped. If only I could  
see beyond these spattered walls of glass. If  
only I could read what I wrote and get back

SHORT CHOKE

With my pen in the chokevalve I wanted  
air, steering, tabulation where my  
ankles gave off bending. Across the  
city I used to head in my naked shoes, trees  
pulsating in autumn dust and a  
table leaning in an abandoned street.  
Carburation and a nosespray now, falling  
at the mirror, and you, jittering your  
keys in my pocket. When you swallowed my  
words I never thought it was I who would  
strangle, pressing my pedaled foot to the floor

SEPTEMBER 13  
By Margaret Christakos

Prescribed intimacy    Withdrawn love

Coming back to artificial community. Everyone transfigured.  
Complexly different faces plasticly stretched across  
faces I knew. I probably also look this changed.

Artists; characters intent on production. On subsidizing  
their own objecthood. We place symbols of ourselves  
adjacent to our bodies and we become spoken to as  
symbols are spoken to. Or as men are engaged, with a  
sort of displaced attention, when the penis as phallic  
culture is always "alongside" themselves and it is  
never necessary to talk directly to a man but rather  
to his representation. His constituency. (How can you  
say this?)

The boat slides in a slightly extended triangular  
sluice. Layers of angles. All soft-edged. A little  
girl dressed in wool sweaters trolls a fishing line  
and her father, eyes veiled by mosquitoes, twists his  
shoulders to constitute a horizontal crossbar. He  
mimics the back of the boat, the shoreline ahead of  
her. She has no fixed position, bobs up and down in  
tandem with the glinting line which connects her  
body and the lake's. Even by this fact, she is more  
connected to water, and so to the moon, than she is  
to her father.

"President ----- with leg braces salvages a projected  
dignity. The ocean liner has a full orchestra laughing,  
gagging on their anticipation, how to be attuned to  
the vacuum around each of his steps, the braces clanking  
lightly, the walking wounded, wounded, staked to the  
renovation of national jubilation, gargling back this  
anthem, applause conditioned, expected, unconditionally."

I sent one letter on thursday, special delivery and  
hand-glued, from the university post office. Two days  
later and the recollection of mailing this letter is  
imprinted in me like a dialogue, and it is in this way  
that our relationship is maintained by illusion. In this  
way also, we share a love that is identical to the first  
rearing of its head between us.

LIMIT'S EDEN  
By Daniel Guimond

As it churns inward,  
removing obstacles where only resistance  
used to operate alone.

Key in a wide open door  
hazards,necessity,invoking changes  
denting,bending  
the architecture of the subject.  
The only object of the subject  
is me ...

That's the correct answer  
at large ... Accidental semantics  
working on the work itself.  
The endless surging dissatisfaction  
of the work makes it hard  
not lying ... At the job of writing  
books.Designing the obsolete,  
on overdrive.

There's always books  
there's always talk.Words for the sake  
of words. Trying to recapture the gloss  
of something said.The edge of language.  
Forgotten memories die easy  
in the newspaper clippings,the seven  
o'clock news and things,recorded  
captured.An image ...

Feel always dressed to kill  
in camouflage gear.All in a day's  
work ...

1918 MANIFESTOES  
By George Myers Jr.

*There is no future for the pastoral  
as a literary form!*

The warning:

The authentic!

With trees  
delicate quilts  
with boughs  
with sweet clover  
in her mouth is memory

.

My wife will bake me a loaf and I'll cherish it  
watching the rockets lean down for a last look.  
The sky is hung low with bloody milk. The cat  
is buried in the leaves. Johnny recalls his sermon.  
The horse lies exploded in the road.

.

Under above, I forget  
the nature of a crow flying against  
the wind

breaking in on rhythm

to silence to conceal  
inside here  
the soldiers' cadence.  
It dies.  
Time changes.

ODE TO A SENTENCE DREAMT BY COLERIDGE

Beginning with a sentence dreamt  
by Coleridge

*Varrius thus prophesied  
vinegar at his door  
by damned frigid tremblings ...*  
There is an opus against  
a thousand tracts  
but no one acts.

The ersatz spring of the ersatz poem  
wound tight is slave to its guide.  
But no one follows.

Chunks of schist say  
"We once did move, in a corporeal way"  
from one distance to another,  
a matter of time. It's lost on us.  
It becomes cold. It puts us on hold.  
We wait for it. But no one waits.



## EGG UNDER MY FEET

By Charles Bernstein

gOP thItS biG GOBBie bucket,  
seLls lik reiNdeEr haRwAre  
bUj thAz's na thwat poont, flin  
ferg juS brEaGinG ab gez laSto  
flubper. Whaz is maze,  
INtendeant to dEep fray ap ferg  
exum[p]les twishting the roop  
off'n unt goatee's buck. FOgem  
frumptious besqualmitity,  
voraxious flumpf. Hig ick's  
wippy. Schlrp, fluuted, pissy-  
podded. Blukeron atootle  
noncious. Ablum ndit  
clupilizittior. Fuzz,  
gandapper, fillbooninous  
claavqwate. Elevantine glopps  
chutdle millipex — fums, forgash,  
forbotame, fumumzyizer.



and later ...

## THE DREAM OF THE AUDIENCE

By Judy Radul

the search for the awe the awe the awe diance the dance  
the pretend the protect the infection who is to select  
elect the re the re present representative the heaven  
sent the he the he thee what is the role of the robe the  
fact of the fascinator to shew to show to wow to make the  
audience woman with a dis display of displaced man mana  
manhood the big experience that makes you EXPERT in life  
to say to slay the bore the border the boredom the  
desire to be filled to be one with the watcher the chief  
of police the cop the cop the copulate the fuck the fuck  
the fill the pen the pen it is written pen penetration  
the breaking of skin the cut the wound the burst balloon  
defiance of boundary dairy milk the one into many many  
into one want to have it have it have it habit of wanting  
I desire sire to stand above to embrace the effacement of  
difference the describe the do nothing but appear the  
dissection the inspection the special specimen but what  
is the a the alpha the ACT that disappears behind the  
shake-shake-shake it, the way the performer juts out from  
the stage like a cock from the body the apparition the  
appear the dis appear the appearance of power pure erection  
seizure of space not her editary as in kingly but temporary  
as in the hand of death the act of domination the come the  
command the teacher the preacher the womb man encircled  
by the space of the stage the concealment of organ meat  
the post of power with no command the actor is a refundable  
bottle re fill re fill feel real half full is hopeful  
you seek election erection only to fall to fail you long  
to expire to inspire exchange but the be-with is belied by  
the technique, the stage speaks of the tantric fuck without  
the loss of fluid penetration without exchange fear of  
fluid the taking in — to be put into — the taking in -to  
be put into — then the inevitable shrinking back the fit  
is only temporary half full is hope full you asked them  
to erase you but they barely effaced your manument you  
still seek slicing severance severing the seven limbs the  
seven flavors of the flesh; breath, sweat, urine, shit  
saliva, vulvamoist and ejaculate each corresponding to a  
different mood in the music. oh oh ah ah ooo ah yeah unhun

## MOVIE EXTRACT

By Angus Brown

J'ai l'Ordre du Lenine pour vingt ans. Mon Dieux! My gosh! And i am still living here on an island controlled by the enemy. Chop off the head of the snapping turtle with an axe before my raped eyes. Lowin is moving me away from this thought. She is not a diversion. We are theurgy. We move with the current during the war. The war is not declared. 60,000 l'actions des Orangistes toujours et: we think "peace". C'est la vie. C'est Quebec. Et l'Acadie.

But there is life outside of Acadia.

Of course. The King has life.

"Vive la differance!"

Forever and ever. Amen.

Je me souviens.

Omen.

But we are in a birchbark canoe.

No. We are in a train. Feel outside of us. The way we are. Where we are.

"Suck my nipple harder."

The Kingston pen is out the window on the south. The train is thundering past it. The litten outline of electric light. Passes west.

Switching station. Four trains pass west. You move my hand. Yes, to the east. Warm wet moist. I love you ... sort of, I don't know you very well. Four westbound train rushes we are here. That is our measure of time. It is dark.

Do I love French literature? Yes. All of it? No. Does it have the right to exist? Yes. Yes. Even if Goebbels burns it? Jump into the fire and let the book survive. The sound is the train. There is no time. We cannot measure this. We can only surround it with words.

Where are we? Smith Falls?

— Orange Young Brittons —

Yes.

I'm thinking of past torture. She moves into my groin. In closed eyes I get hard. I don't cum. I'm saving myself for later you.

In the bush.

That's my imagination. I haven't slept yet. She has beautiful smeyes. French.

We go back to the book of eyes, the book of (smiles). There are no smiles here. Only laughter. The doctor's laughter. At my six-times broken and crushed spine. The eyes are looking at me. Her ears are hearing his laughter. 48 hours I'm in pain. Lowin takes it away from me. I am not feeling pain. I am not suffering. I am not pain. I am alive. No. I am living more than alive. I transcend my own existence. Orange Young Brittons. 10 seconds after I am dead, I am with Lowin. We are our brains.

My life is a film for the making. Some of this script is stock footage. You cannot tell the difference. (fade v/o) you cannot tell the difference. (fade v/o out) you cannot tell the difference.

THIS IS NOT A RESERVATION

YET

When this IS a reservation

we negotiate.

How do we do that with Status, non-Status, metis, 1/4 Indian Blood, and less, Canadian apartheid revealed here.

In the meantime ...

Before we do this I have a question:

"What is it?"

## THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW

By Scott Moodie

first of all the world is a dive they got in there  
by mistake gradually maturing into media already  
having an extensive model we live there are many  
things the individual is becoming what not you are  
the result which incorporates morality to his or  
her identity we don't feel the need to say sufficient  
no thinking man is different in essence tune into  
everyone doing their own icons identities of the  
modern world personal responsibility only what  
you wish to offer what we attempt to capture is  
a narrowing of your behind a preconceived package  
this is our end and this is an extensive model  
role defined by others who are trying to say what  
or who I can love or hate christ and buddha wit  
will leave that sort of simplistic solemnity like  
the world in which more strident cling neatly  
packaged socio-politics multi-media performance  
going on at once you safely withdrawing for life  
to come to terms use the word for fear of its  
receiver we are the radio it is a performance  
what are we trying to do bout being christian  
and buddhist cliques and excuses it's too easy  
to hide potentialities it seems that the spoken  
word might not be clear at all what we're saying  
now wee show be experienced on greater permissive-  
ness for life to come to terms like the world in  
which going on at once no one explanation is a  
window

# CANTICLE

## By P.J. Holdstock

To Brother Uranium who art so heavy and still  
 In thy caverns under the earth  
 Who art so loath to come to light  
 That thou spittest radiation at  
 The drop of a hardhat  
 Who gleameth so dully leaden yet  
 Who art infinitely obedient in  
 Fusion spawning generations upon  
 Generations of fissioned nuclei  
 With the speed of light  
 Squared

To Sister Plutonium who art like thy brother  
 in all ways but better  
 Who can come 58 times in a single fusion and will  
 For jew gentile commie bastard  
 And Great White Freedom Fighter  
 If only asked  
 Once

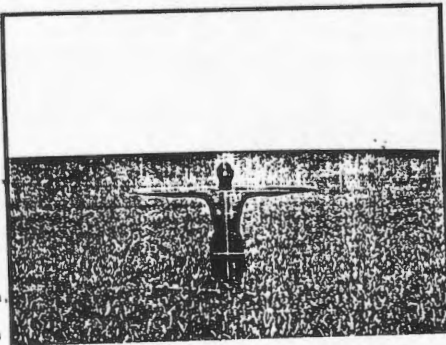
To Brother Hydrogen so light and free and lovely  
 Who burneth with a pale blue flame  
 Who art present in all forms of life  
 Who giveth us water so precious  
 Useless in The Event

To Sister Radiation all decked in gamma rays that  
 shine  
 Who streameth into the air the earth the water  
 Into hair and tissue tooth and bone and eyeball  
 Who art so fair and faithful  
 Thou wilt not desert us as long as we all  
 shall live

To Brother Fire who art so fierce and beautiful  
 Who rageth terribly and roareth like the wind  
 Who forges the strong and tempers the weak  
 Who purifies the foul and lays  
 Waste the citadel and the golden arches  
 Who will incinerate the wicked  
 Toast roast charbroil fry  
 And the innocent a like  
 Al fresco  
 Whose lascivious tongues  
 Shall whip us and lick us  
 To the fundamental ecstasy  
 The all consuming consummation  
 60 billion served

To Sister Darkness  
 Switch out the light

Afrika screams, Aspen dance. Infant hyacinths rent and thrash. The man collects  
 plasticine faces on the beach tonight. Simulacra; fleur de lys flight. In  
 Weymouth sands the fantastic boor so tired of his own image, he went to  
 his leaden cellar where he had decanted the images of others. Selecting from  
 his 1967 vintage, he was a hipster for 38 days. They stopped for the dealing;  
 two filthy aces turned up empty handed. Snake eyes and rats' paws danced a  
 jig on old 95; straw hat farmer had to look twice to make sure, and on time  
 two snake eyes winked at him. The Hypnos sees no action until the ravens  
 fly backwards and the king of Sweden throws his ermine in the washing machine.  
 An emu wearing horn rims announces Adolph Hitler playing trumpet with Benny  
 Goodman and Co.  
 white dreaming  
 yearning. Sturm  
 substituted for  
 Magnolia buttresse  
 loquent nihilism.  
 diers, far, more  
 February. Buckskin.  
 Battling sorcgress



Black and  
 technicolor  
 und drang  
 the Good Life.  
 shelter magni-  
 Nursemaid sol-  
 eleventh than  
 beads, and LSD.  
 silver and black

to the end of Pantos randomness. Burnished butler stands in Never-Never land;  
 the dumbwaiter waited to receive the ashes of those duly departed whose relatives  
 deigned not scatter the remains on any dubious sands, not even the aging, Aegean  
 sea. If you look hard enough, you'll wonder why you wasted the time.  
 Then they all shall die--tiny fires in the sun.  
 Indifferent angels will try not to yawn as they bear yet another tale of how  
 someone wanted to laugh with sinners rather than cry with saints. Then light will  
 go the way of Lucifer, the morning star; Con-Ed will abdicate and abolish all power.  
 Black out in spacetown. Red ramparts sing and shine.

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 CHRISTIAN DAMIAN

# 2 P.M. MST ← FLIGHT OF BIRDS → 3 P.M. MDT

## By Deborah Godin

here the tension is broken  
 by a single dark parabola  
 a gray pigeon cutting across  
 the heavy pre-storm air  
 due north  
 where there is no time, only  
 speed and distance and  
 wings describing the weather  
 every movement reflected  
 on the advancing clouds  
 convex god's-eye watching  
 the rain dove ushering in  
 red heat lightning and thunder  
 a cool wind from the mountains

along the high horizon  
 the merlin's dark eye watches  
 the hillside beneath its wings  
 turning, coming to life  
 it sweeps up easily beyond  
 the trees, in slow motion one of  
 many rising stars  
 invisible in the broad day-light  
 every movement taking place  
 under the blinding sun  
 as sparrows fly up and scatter  
 before it, settling back again  
 among the shining branches  
 where it recently rained

# "THIS IS A RECORDING ..."

## By Corneil Van der Spek

"I used to buy lottery tickets. Sometimes  
 weird things would happen. One night I was  
 watchin' Wintario on Global. A 4 came up and  
 then a 1 so I said to myself 4 and 1 are 5,  
 and sure enough a 5 came up. Then I said 5  
 and 1 are 6 and a 6 came up, so I said 6 and  
 5 are 11 and holy shit 11 came up. It scared  
 the hell out of me. After the show the phone  
 rang. It was Ellen. 'I'm born again,' she  
 said. It makes you wonder."

\*\*\*

"When I was a kid I believed in Hell. I  
 bugged my Sunday School teacher to tell me  
 about it but she wouldn't. I saw it once in  
 my sleep. It was like this huge apartment  
 building on fire. In every room were machines  
 that tortured you. If you screamed they would  
 cut you.... Once Dad came home pissed and  
 hit Mom right on the cheek. Then he noticed  
 I was watchin'. 'Go to Hell,' he said. I  
 used to believe in it but not anymore."

\*\*\*

"Me and my brother Greg used to play the  
 Game of Life. It was our favourite game. You  
 used this plastic car (mine was the black  
 one) and you stuck a blue peg in the driver's  
 seat. At the church you got a pink peg for a  
 wife. Along the way you got money, life insur-  
 ance and kids. Some squares were good like  
 'Win the lottery, advance 5' and others were  
 bad like 'Tornado strikes, go back to start.'  
 Revenge squares were the best, you could send  
 someone backwards or take their money. The  
 object was to get to the mansion at the end.  
 We would always end up fightin' before we  
 got there though. Greg would make me say  
 'uncle'. I gave him a black eye once."

\*\*\*

"It's four in the morning so I better  
 stop. This is my last tape. Tomorrow I have  
 to erase some."

# TOO MANY STEAKS AND CIGARETTES

## By M. Kettner

it's hard to believe  
 a person can be young, and yet so ugly  
 but it happens to everyone  
 get up in the morning  
 and the day reminds you of a car wreck  
 so you light up, have some caffeine,  
 jerk off, maybe eat a steak  
 but the coagulation has set in  
 soon you'll be cement  
 and good for nothing except work  
 (if only you had a job)  
 the moon is a pair of college-kid cheeks  
 pressed against a speeding car window  
 the city has the horns of a bull  
 the tomahawk stuck in your chest  
 is making you older  
 soon, you'll be thoroughly initiated  
 into the hospital of life



## CONCERNING FIREFLIES AND GRAVITY

### By Giles Slade

no one has told you  
about fireflies but  
everyone knows  
dreams must obey gravity.

Let's begin there.

Most nights when it doesn't  
rain or snow  
the dreams slide down  
the black mountain.

Right now  
there is wet smoke wetting  
the black watershed.

The fireflies appear  
to wink out as  
the dreams roll past them but

no one can tell  
if the fireflies themselves go dark  
inside the sliding dream.

This much IS certain.

The black, wet mountain sleeps.

The dreams obey their gravity.

## THE EARLY PLASTIC SHRINE

### By M.A.C. Farrant

Everything went wrong for the Christmas Party. I got a spot on my liver and had to go to the hospital for tests. By the time they were through with me I was an hour and a half late. Trying to dress was impossible; I couldn't remember how to do it, what went with what. My blue stockings had a tear up the left leg; I put a red top with an orange bottom. Then as I mounted the stairs to my party I had an orgasm on each step. This slowed things up considerably.

Finally I arrived, two hours late for my own party. The Jazz Trio from the Indian Reserve was not doing well, no one could hear them, they were performing away from the crowd, towards the air and the trees. Someone in the crowd yelled out, "They stink!" and then half the guests left. Meanwhile I realized that most of the guests were relatives of in-laws I did not like. Who invited them? I wondered. None of my friends were there. Who invited these semi-strangers and all these eleven year old boys eating up the cakes?

My husband said, "We're out of avocados," which meant there could be no more Tex-Mex and I hadn't even started the Chili which was to be served in half an hour's time.

I decided to leave. On my way out I witnessed a conversation between a neighbour on her way in and my mother-in-law standing beside her yellow convertible. "I wouldn't bother with the party," my mother-in-law was saying, "chances are the toilet bowl hasn't even been cleaned."

I visited my friend, the priest. He'd just come off a long shift with a dead man. "I thought that soul would never leave," he said, "it just kept flying around the kitchen like a piece of white blubber, banging into the kitchen cupboards, scaring the budgie."

We made love on his colonial chesterfield. Outside, snow was falling, one perfect flake at a time. The priest told me, "Christmas is a good time to die. I can always tell when a soul is ready to leave a dead man, it begins with the eyes. The furrows between the brows become a canyon and the eyes pale and stare almost erotically."

While he kissed me, warts grew on my lips.

I spent the rest of the night at the Early Plastic Shrine of Leo H. Baekland in Yonkers, New York. There, beneath a giant replica of a bobbin end made in 1912 by combining clean phenolic resin with formaldehyde to create the first truly synthetic plastic, I slept.

I dreamed I was a child of the mid twentieth century, waiting around for science fiction to come true. I was riding in my personal helicopter; the traffic in the heavens was so congested that fleeing souls were crashing into helicopter blades like demented sea gulls. The pillage was awful; priests by the submarine load had to be called in to place wreaths of plastic bananas at the grave sites.

Leo H. Baekland invited me to dinner. We sat down on the roof of his two storey laboratory to carve a turkey dinner the size of a gelatine capsule.

"There is nothing new under the sun," he said, handing me my half of the pill.

"Not true," I screamed. "Don't I have Science Digest? Isn't something new promised every month? And right here beside the ad for fibre optics, doesn't it promise new works, new suns?"

"New things are treacherous," said Leo H. Baekland, "newly invented things, insisting on the future. Possibly we could have done without plastic."

Suddenly I was having a nightmare; it was frightening to think of living on without some wonderful anticipation, some happy surprise, some new gadget.

I stood at the end of a long black tunnel and shouted to my friend, the priest, and to Leo H. Baekland: "Waiting around for science fiction to come true is a lot more satisfying than waiting around for death." I was crying.

Their laughter cut the night like a musical saw. "Booze, dope, technological fixes, it's all the same to us," they said.

The doctor woke me up.

"Here," he said, removing me from the Early Plastic Shrine, "we'll just attach this plastic tubing to your brain and pump you full of someone new to be. It won't take long and I believe you're an isolated case. I don't believe that what you've got is easily transmitted; you'll be back at your party in no time."

## OCCUPATIONS OF THE MATERIAL WORLD

### By Glen Downie

is it discrimination.that keeps angels out.of politics.is this why.there are no angels.in cabinet.a precious few.in public service.where are the angels.we knew as children.what became of the ones that perished.in Christmas.tree fires.isn't it true.that energy is never.destroyed only.transformed.can modern science.help us. explain their recurring presence.in cake.tin foil.stone.snow.black leather.chrome.waterfalls.is it true.as has been.reported in scripture.and The National.Enquirer.that there have been angels.caught in spiderwebs.hammerlocks.antique mirrors.on the blurred edges.of Polaroid pictures.and sleeping.in the subway.how do we account.for the apparent love.of immaterial beings.for the material.world isn't it significant.that there are so many.relatively speaking.in natural resources.angels in the open.pit and.angels underground.angels in oil.angels in steel.as well as tall timber angels.burly angels.with birthmarks.tattoos.lunchbuckets.heavy socks.radiant.grease-monkey angels.angels of fire.with screaming.red trucks.ash and rust angels.earth and dust angels.boom and bust angels.can and must angels.the angels of now.and the angels of later.the white winged light.that sings.that men have spoken to.wrestled with.forever.

## LETTERS

### By Robert Kenter

i am constantly  
dreaming about mail  
mail arriving  
mail slipped into  
mail boxes  
mailmen picking mail  
up and mail  
taking off from  
runways

my mail is always  
filled with the most  
exciting advertisements  
advertisements for  
soap and dog food and  
letters of introduction  
and contests  
and letters  
i know have been  
sealed like valentines  
with tiny kisses

the mail of my dreams  
this is the mail  
of my dreams

## MOBY SALLY

### Review of Gerry Gilbert's Moby Jane

### By Susan Parker

MOBY JANE  
By Gerry Gilbert  
Poetry 268 pp. 5 x 8  
ISBN 0-88910-309-7 pb \$14.50  
1987  
The Coach House Press  
401 (rear) Huron Street  
Toronto, Canada M5S 2G5  
(416) 979-2217

To be a mathematician or a multiplier or an Indian Chief or a sailor around the Arctic or in a navy alcove  
t'is of thee bellicose squalor and the bowels uproar of the Sea Hag.

This is a book review of *MOBY JANE* by Gerry Gilbert titled *MOBY SALLY*. Who was Sally? She was the baby sister in the *DICK AND JANE* series.

Gilbert has invited a particularly odious comparison by invoking the muse of Melville. Melville sailed the whaling ships in the days when the odds were nearly equal, when whaling was as dangerous for the hunters as for the hunted. Melville did not deliberately set out to suffer for his art; rather he was an adventurer who sailed the South Seas, who lived with cannibals, who lived dangerously and later wrote about it. Melville gained popularity because he represented people's ambitions.

Herman Melville established his reputation as a writer with several popular but controversial books based on his experiences at sea. *MOBY DICK* was the beginning of the end, critically acclaimed, but did not sell well. His next book, an autobiography, scandalized nearly everybody and also earned him a reputation as a lunatic. He spent most of his remaining life working for the government and died in virtual obscurity.

*MOBY DICK*, by Herman Melville, that leviathan writer from New York, who wove together an incredible amount of disparate elements from what would at first glance appear to be a simple tale of men whaling, who perhaps saw in the humble occupation of these sailors something about the nature of man and wrote about it, who with a simple plot and first rate storytelling spun a yarn that on one level — that of Greek Tragedian proportions — revealed man destroyed by his nemesis, and who on another level spun a Christian story of the destruction of evil by good, evil by the innocent. It covered a lot of ground, expanding the simple into the profound.

Unfortunately, a bio of Gerry Gilbert was not provided with the book for review; however this reviewer doubts that Gilbert has been whaling for a very long time. Gilbert lives, however, in the scary world of intellectual danger. Gilbert's long suit (bridge allusion) is that his contemplations, reflections in hindsight provide the reader with a springing off point for their own meditations. What emerges is the work of a modern explorer, seeking (or perhaps stumbling upon) the profound in the humble. Since it would be false to paint Gilbert as an Einstein of existence it is therefore necessary to point out that he sometimes reads as a glib tourist coasting on a mental rickshaw through his own life.

"the one carrot sun  
dangles just over the hill  
the hill to the west"

*MOBY JANE* is an impressionistic scrapbook, a diary clipped from scattered moments.

" from moment to moment  
you pick it up & add it to the book

the book is a wheel  
in the act of understanding it you are the  
ground"

What concerns Gilbert are man's fears, specifically, fears of the commonplace. Gilbert covers a lot of ground but reduces the experience to an intellectual amusement. In the first thirty pages the writing travels over Canada, England, and the western USA. (In fine Canadian form, he also manages to insult the CPR.) However there is a certain idiosyncratic (neurotic?) charm in the casualness with which he treats his experiences.

"you can't stand driving just like some  
people can't stand tv  
you give your bike to a tree  
you walk as far as you can see"

Leonard Cohen once said that he was on a path that was very short but infinitely wide. Gilbert's path is much shorter and even wider — tremendous peripheral vision but no depth of field. He sees things, nearly everything, but is a reactor, not an investigator. Therefore, the reader feels only the effect, never the cause. Since this is how we spend our lives, reacting, seldom understanding, Gilbert perfectly reflects the common man.

Gilbert's poems travel wide, in that he has just been somewhere, hopefully a place with a beer, or is going somewhere, and perhaps it is this that gives the book that deep sense of loneliness. Perhaps he travels because he cannot rest, cursed like the crew of *THE FLYING DUTCHMAN* (the crew's souls condemned to sail the seas eternally in payment for their sins).

"Touched by a beautiful sanity I've been tumbling home to  
from vision of difference, the crazy cities of time inside the rain,  
outside the sun, shining stone by stone, amounting to a small  
pile at my feet of ideas to pick up & lick & throw skipping as far  
as I can, as I can see, until they sink into blindness, falling to the  
centre of attention. Beauty, the switch between light & gravity,  
that doesn't look past being seen, that being held feels no  
weight, turns the actual on. We return to each other. Make life.  
Each time. Home free."

In Melville's time (the salty days of yore), a handful of men in a puny rowboat strained to follow the formidable enemy, the majestic leviathan, who was cruising easily. Gilbert is in the same waters, chasing a larger meaning, working mightily to catch that which eludes him.

"where if you don't avoid all that fast Freud you'll die Jung"

For instance, Gilbert conjures up the heavyweights of psychoanalysis only to trivialize with a hackneyed cliché. Is Gilbert grasping at a larger meaning only to drop the ball, or is this humour simply an attempt to elude serious confrontation? Words are Gilbert's oar strokes taking him around, over, under and even ahead of *THE BEAST*, but never close enough to grasp. The book contains almost an endless variety of constructions and visual styles, amazing in their diversity, but basically camouflaging a lack of depth. Gilbert writes a good game, but talk's cheap, whiskey costs money. However there is something to say for experimentation and shoving words around, if done with feeling or an acute aesthetic sense that will enhance the reading or the comprehension.

Gilbert's forte is quirky intellectual brain teasers, that fuse odd grasps of the obvious and some original thought. Since originality is something that one feels rather than one analyses you will just have to read the book to appreciate Gilbert's ability to fry your brains.

If we're going to call an iambic pentameter an iambic pentameter, there is a point where words become an ocean between a writer and his homeland, where the words stop being the insight, and become the chasm. Gilbert has done the opposite of writing himself into a corner, he has written himself into a vast space between galaxies. The result is the loneliness that come with no anchors. Gilbert seems to be as detached from his writings as he is from his life. Gilbert becomes a Boswell to himself, as if he was walking around another person, taking notes from a great distance. Thus his poems take on a peculiar zen quality, aloof but intellectually engaging. Gilbert poses as both the asker of the riddle and the answerer of the riddle, a modern Sphinx. This dialectic provides the means for the reader's enlightenment, so even though the book is without formal structure or theme, without the traditional catharsis of *MOBY DICK* it has the meditative quality that allows us to discern the larger meaning.

Moreover Gilbert is generous with his writing, giving the reader much and often much more than we can handle.

"heading to the mainland  
& the birds fly up as the boat bears down on them  
they fly into the wind  
& wheel in formation  
& bank  
& chug their way east  
ink notes on the margin"

## BOOKS RECEIVED

*How To* by Endre Farkas. The Muses' Co./La Compagnie des Muses, 51 rue de L'Eglise, Dorion, Quebec J7V 1W5

The principal shortcoming of this otherwise excellent book of poetry is the author's interest in newborn children. Farkas is persuasive when he writes about anything else, which is most of the time. The book itself is structured with wit and intelligence. Remarkable finesse is exhibited in the prose poems and the poems with longer lines. The "renovations motif" referred to in the title sounds cutesy, but Farkas fills it with energy and exasperation and a very human ambiguity. — Jim Francis

*Uncle Ovid's Exercise Book* by Don Webb. Illinois State University/Fiction Collective. ISBN: 0-932511-17-1

In Don Webb's book of miniature fictions, the author puts a number of significant obstacles in his own path — then navigates around them with startling dexterity.

The book consists of 97 metamorphoses varying in length from half a page to three or four pages. In each mini-story the principal character undergoes a severe physical transformation. Fortunately, Webb's inventive skills successfully transcend his apparently formulaic approach. Just when a note of repetition threatens the proceedings, you start making associative leaps, tying together superficially disparate images. Just when you realize that the image matrix is a very loose one, Webb introduces intriguing graphological devices.

*Uncle Ovid's Exercise Book* has enough structure and shape to discourage random sampling. The tiny texts are, however, very rich and dense; for maximum enjoyment they should be consumed in small doses. — Jim Francis

*SKRAG* by David Amason. Turnstone Press, 607 — 99 King Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1H7. \$8.95.

David Amason's collection of poems consists of two long poems and two sections of shorter lyric poems. The unifying characteristic of all the poems is an overt attempt to reach beyond standard expectations for the form of the individual pieces. The title poem, about the life of a farm dog, is full of broad, often scatological humour. But the humour eventually gives way to somber, even ugly realities. The two sections of lyric poems use well turned but essentially familiar nature imagery. The imagery, however, draws the reader to other-than-usual conclusions — no simple deification of the natural world here. The lyric poems invariably turn back to the ambiguous and convoluted world of human interaction.

Amason always takes a step past the obvious and the traditional, both in perspective and technique. This in itself becomes a bit repetitive in the lyric poems. But he's reaching for more than most poets, and the best pieces in *SKRAG* are more persuasive for the attempt. What is most heartening is Amason's sure-handed use of fragment, allusive, discontinuous technique in the last section of the book, the hilarious "Descartes and Dick". *SKRAG* is full of polished and persuasive poetry, but "Descartes and Dick" promises even better things for the future. — Jim Francis

*Bee-Buzz, Salmon Leap* by Knut Ødegård. Translated from the Nynorsk by George Johnston. Penumbra Press, 7 Aurora Street, Kapuskasing, Ontario, Canada P5N 1J6 47

*Bee-Buzz, Salmon Leap* is a slightly schizophrenic book of poetry. The strongest poems scrape around on the underside of pastoral and domestic landscapes, deriving energy from the dirt under the fingernails. Nordic myths are approached through fractured lines and arbitrary-seeming stanza breaks, and used to intensify personal ends. But occasionally poems about childhood, adolescence, and parenting are offered up in tidy, conventional packages dispensing tired, conventional wisdom. This last group, fortunately, makes up only a small-but-annoying percentage of an otherwise coherent and challenging collection.

The back cover of the book claims that this is "a unified volume as the poet ordered and shaped it for publication in Norway in 1983." The results don't hang together the way they should. Certain poems speak to one another in surprising and persuasive ways, but others are left to fend for themselves. A more objective editorial eye might have helped this collection. — Jim Francis

*The Constancy of Objects* by Kathleen McCracken. Penumbra Press, 7 Aurora Street, Kapuskasing, Ontario, Canada P5N 1J6 47.

It would be difficult to say too many good things about Kathleen McCracken's *The Constancy of Objects*. Her forays away from a straight left margin are infrequent and a bit tentative, but everything else about this collection indicates the presence of a mature and exciting poet.

The scope of individual poems ranges from pithy, biting snapshots to contemplative, multi-part explorations. McCracken reworks a number of less-than-familiar poetic forms (the Aubade or Alba, the Ghazal, the canso d'amor), re-examines Yeats, and threads a second, more subtle voice through the larger text. Line breaks are used to present meanings that are subsequently withdrawn and reconstituted. Words and turns of phrase are slowly invested, via additive processes, with unusually rich shades of meaning.

Poems that use language itself as the subject demonstrate a familiarity with linguistic principles. McCracken is clearly no dilettante in this area. What makes these poems more than academic exercises, however, is the maintenance of tone: "This is how I would say myself to you/ in closed vowels, divided vocables/ the quiet consonants of vows and orders". McCracken refuses to draw lines between the examination of emotion and the exploration of language. In *The Constancy of Objects* they are treated as inevitably connected and equally important facets of a fragmented psychic landscape. The result is a cohesive and complex book that consistently rewards the reader for meeting the demands of the text. — Jim Francis

*Beyond the Surface* by Irma Eibich. Firefly Books, 3520 Pharmacy Avenue, Unit 1C, Scarborough, Ontario M1W 2T8. \$29.95.

Irma Eibich takes Polaroid SX-70 photographs of flowers. Then she alters them, with heat and pressure, to produce startling, painterly images that don't look very much like simple snapshots of flowers. Eibich takes a big step beyond still life, turning the most mundane of mediums into an exploration of technical possibilities and personal expression.

*Beyond the Surface* is a large format, glossy book with 50 colour plates of enlargements of Eibich's Polaroids.

*Women for all Seasons* edited by Wanda Coleman and Joanne Leedom-Ackerman. The Woman's Building, 1727 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, California, 90012. \$8.00 U.S.

This anthology of women's poetry and prose presents the reader with a diverse collection of works — works which explore the myriad of relationships that provide a focus for women's lives. Its approach is traditional and conservative; the title alludes to a work that deals quite distinctly with the vision and determination of "The Common Man"; a distinctly patriarchal hero. The echo implies a casting-off of the masculine world, but its dependence upon a masculine allusion contradicts the overt perspective.

A few pieces stand out, most notably *still life with writing* by Debra Pearlstein ("he asks me if I'm still writing .../ sure I'm still writing .../ still writing bad checks/ still writing shopping lists/ still writing nightmare scenarios/ where I'm forty and alone,/ or dying and alone ... still writing prescriptions for morphine/ still writing letters to Santa Claus"); *For The New Bard* by Lisa Teasley ("someone scrawled the news/ with a rude hand —/ "Black Woman is Allah."/ I laugh each time I pass/ because pride is better/ than self-pity./ Forced to crown our own heads,/ I say, Fuck every living martyr."); and *New Bride* by Cecilia Woloch ("Not eternal love, no way to fix it... When he was gone, she lacked something to knock up against. The damage she did to the doorways set them back years. The fire seemed rootless.") The common element between these three writings is a passionate sensuality (indeed a passion and an anger that probe and linger, that tear apart, and threaten to break out of the fairly rote structure). The poems in this collection refuse to subvert traditional writing technique.

Few references to culture or colour resonate in this collection; they are almost token, an afterthought. What we are left with is not a sense of exhilaration or the hope of a new construction, but rather a vague sense of frustration, a promise anticipating fulfillment. — Carol J. Anderson

*The Efficiency of Killers* by Ian McCulloch. Penumbra Press, 7 Aurora Street, Kapuskasing, Ontario, Canada P5N 1J6. 72pp. \$9.95

Ian McCulloch's collection of poems is a contribution to the eternal poetic questioning of the conflicts between childhood and adulthood, nature and humanity — the natural at war with the unnatural. Through various breathless, snapshot angles, we are invited to reminisce, to mull over the universal themes and actions and situations of childhood and "maturity". Unrelenting analysis of the connection between reason, action and form (both literal and metaphorical) is occasionally obtrusive; the images are most striking when presented clearly and without omnipotent interruption: "The holiday was camping/ in the river country because/ they had heard it was beautiful/ and for so long he had listed/ hiking as a hobby/ on job applications/ just to fill the line." The poet succeeds in pulling together a tangible microcosm of humanity, and the generally effective use of the destructive and redemptive forces of nature as metaphor succeed in uniting a potentially disparate collection. McCulloch is an accomplished lyric poet, but the force of his poetry could only be enhanced by challenging the reader with more sophisticated technique. — Carol J. Anderson

*Impulse: New City Fiction* (16 Skey Lane, Toronto, Ontario M6J 3S4 \$10.00 208p)

*Impulse* magazine's double issue of fiction by previously unpublished Toronto writers contains a lot of promising material. But as a collection of short stories it has a couple of serious problems. Many of the stories are similar in tone, technique, and content. Consequently the best pieces are haunted by a sense of familiarity, and thus robbed of their innate visceral strength. The lesser efforts expect the reader to accept alcohol, drugs, or insanity as sufficient occasion for the display of impenetrable exercises in technique. Still, there is good writing here. Susan Perly, Anne Milne, and Walker Smith stand out. — Jim Francis



THIS IS A PROPORTIONALLY SMALLER LETTER ACCORDING TO ITS PEN-STROKE; NOT ACCORDING TO A DIFFERENT CLASS-V ONE'S ARBITRARY WHIM ACCORDING TO THE WIDTH OF THE HARD-BR OOD-EDGED PEN-NIB :

moses maimon's 800 year old\young guide of th perplexed shall serve us hereNow as th master-code of how to readd\wright <> we readd\write th medium in which our meSS\age-s are enclosed as a straight+jacket : iron+curtains & border+lines locking modern mass wo\man in\out ! grid+irons regulating mot-ion into modern city's straight horizontal\vertical lines ! stream+lined woMen queuing up one by one ! two by two for buses ! movies ! concerts in-rain-in-frost-in-wind-in-snow-in-night ! thoughts being controlled into typo\graphical straight horizontal\vertical lines ! ears being stereoTYPed into listening to a nton dvorak's symphony from th new wor[l]d ; recorded on compact discs which cut up anal\ogue con-tinuums into th either\Or r-1\0 of digital dichotomies ! thus as a consequence actually HEaRing aldous huxley's brave new wor[l]d ; depicting a scientifically contr\olled civilization of woo\man robots whose humanE shape ! curved body ! text\ured figure ! andro\gyness have been straightened out <> we at\tempt to deconstruct th normal working frame of readIng\writ[h]ing by mimicking th rule in order to dis-play its disOrderLine-SS <> lines are not regular ! their letters do not occur\n at fixed intervals <> to keep up th idyll of straight lines ! th printer v computer must push th let-ters aRound [to-gether v to-part] <> we do not wish to push any thing v any body arOund <> nor is it th case that we abhor any regularity <> for instance ! th to rah sc\roll-s have been copied from scribe to scribe with utmost diligence ! yet this regularity has been controlled by human hand & not by having machines handle [w]holy texts <> farther more th bible worships straight lines as we'll ! but th irregularity is not hidden ! it rather ostensibly dis\plays its self by enlarging a letter art-full-y in order to en-rOll th [w]hole into vertical lines <> in our l\anguage we fragment words into part\icles at th end of th inVisible\unReal line ! aS-Sign\ing th hyphen only to th first limb of th broken body <> we revolt again\st inequality in th distribution of signs ! as th sign which is to align th divorced couple is only given to th first ! preDominAting parTner <> likewise we revolt aGain\st inequality in th recognition of signs ! as th beginning of a lign is taken as a sign ! where\as th end of a lign is not : th hyphen deSign-ates where th lign face-s terminal dis\ease <> in biblical hebrew ! on th other hand ! there are no divided words <> we do not wish to break any thing v any body <> not only are there no hymens ! but there are no punctuation marks at all <> we find musical notes associated to th letters ! signifying how to sing & phrase [end a phrase] th words : there is no division of labour between psychical [cyclical rere-adding] & physical [imPuls-ive singing] acTivity <> in judaism not only weMen ! but also letters are all equal befor D?G <> there are no CAPITAList v pedalled letters ! nor third class punctuation signs <> there is only one kind of letters to be differentiated by size alone ! which does not affect their qualitative & proportional idEntity ! as th microCosm is th macroCosm when th dance\r feels th tides pulsate in their rhythm v when the spectator is taken by surprise how small th dance\r ! who looked so tall on stage =